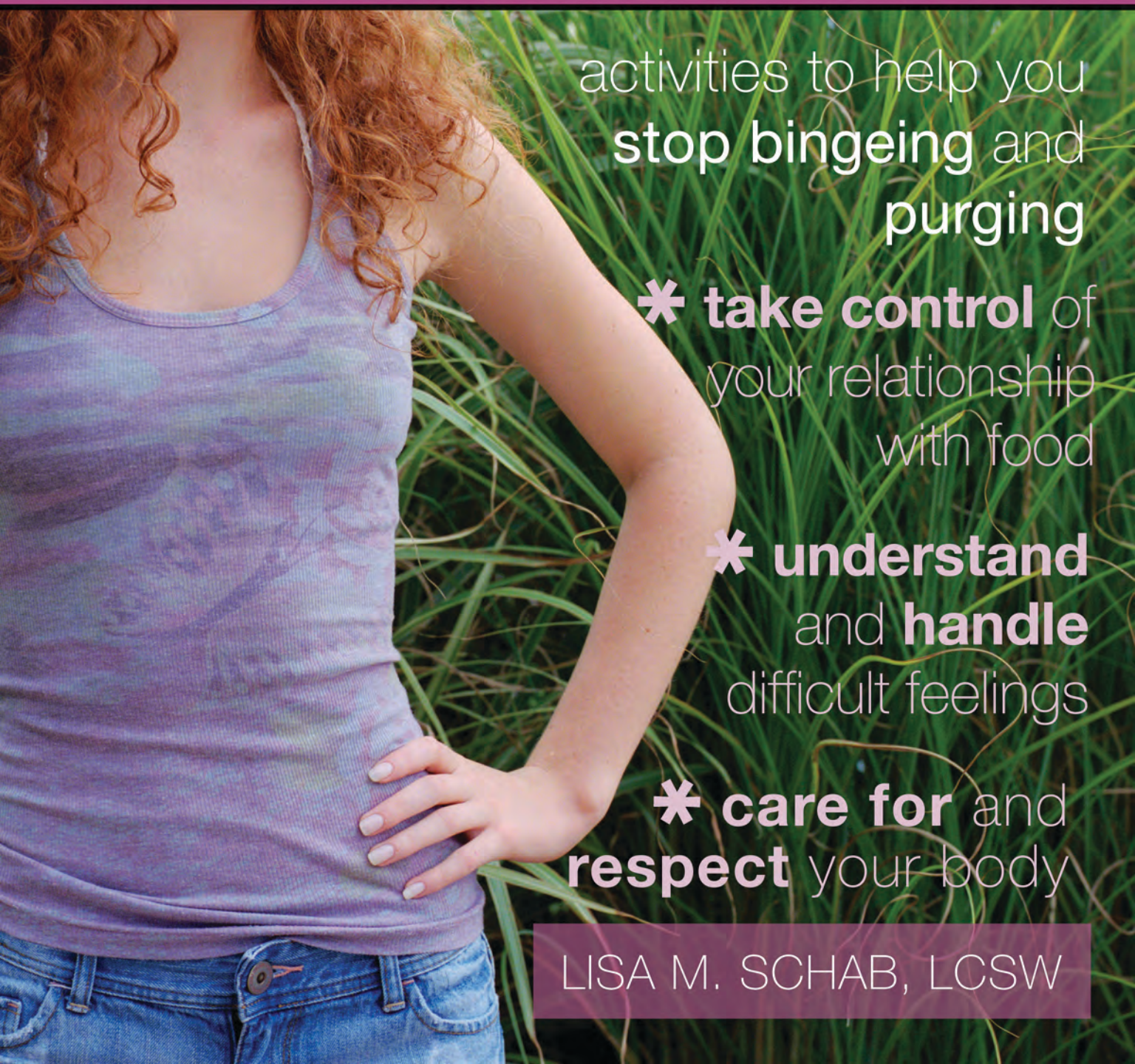


a n i n s t a n t h e l p b o o k f o r t e e n s

the bulimia workbook for teens



activities to help you
**stop bingeing and
purging**

*** take control** of
your relationship
with food

*** understand**
and **handle**
difficult feelings

*** care for** and
respect your body

LISA M. SCHAB, LCSW

“It was a joy to work through the exercises in *The Bulimia Workbook for Teens*. I was particularly impressed with the spiritual and altruistic aspects of some of the material. Teens should feel very validated to have the worksheets in this book. Each one is like a supportive hug.”

—Joan Mrozek, clinical leader at Linden Oaks Hospital at Edward in Naperville, IL

the bulimia workbook for teens

activities to help you
**stop bingeing and
purging**

LISA M. SCHAB, LCSW

Instant Help Books
A Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Publisher's Note

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering psychological, financial, legal, or other professional services. If expert assistance or counseling is needed, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

Distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books

Copyright © 2010 by Lisa Schab
Instant Help Books
A Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
5674 Shattuck Avenue
Oakland, CA 94609
www.newharbinger.com

Cover design by Amy Shoup

All Rights Reserved

PDF ISBN: 9781572248038

The Library of Congress has Cataloged the Print Edition as:

Schab, Lisa M.

The bulimia workbook for teens : activities to help you stop bingeing and purging / Lisa M. Schab.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-1-57224-807-6 (pbk.)

ISBN-13: 978-1-57224-803-8 (pdf ebook)

ISBN-10: 1-57224-807-6 (pbk.)

1. Bulimia--Treatment--Problems, exercises, etc. 2. Cognitive therapy for teenagers--Problems, exercises, etc. I. Title.
RC552.B84S33 2010
616.85'26306076--dc22

2010035511

Contents

A Personal Message	v
To the Helping Professional	vii
Notes for Use of This Workbook	ix
Activity 1. Bulimia Is a False Friend	1
Activity 2. I Am a Miracle	5
Activity 3. A New Lifeline	8
Activity 4. Steps Toward Change	12
Activity 5. A Power Greater Than Bulimia	15
Activity 6. Inner Peace	19
Activity 7. Peace Through My Breath	22
Activity 8. Peace Through Thoughts and Images	25
Activity 9. Peace Through Meditation	28
Activity 10. Peace Through Mindfulness	32
Activity 11. Peace Through Gratitude	35
Activity 12. Peace Through Loving Spirit	38
Activity 13. False Media Images	41
Activity 14. The Truth About My Body	44
Activity 15. Body Image	47
Activity 16. Physical and Emotional Hunger	51
Activity 17. Fuel and Nutrition	54
Activity 18. Understanding Feelings	57
Activity 19. Managing Feelings	60
Activity 20. Managing Anger	64
Activity 21. Managing Sadness	67

Activity 22. Managing Fear	70
Activity 23. Managing Anxiety	73
Activity 24. Managing Guilt and Shame	77
Activity 25. Tolerating Discomfort	80
Activity 26. Releasing Pain	83
Activity 27. Control	86
Activity 28. Embracing Imperfection	89
Activity 29. My Authentic Self	92
Activity 30. Relax And Reward	96
Activity 31. The Next Right Step	100
Activity 32. Solving Problems	104
Activity 33. “I Feel” Statements	108
Activity 34. Acting Assertively	111
Activity 35. Limits and Boundaries	114
Activity 36. Honesty	118
Activity 37. Acceptance and Forgiveness	121
Activity 38. Handling Conflict	124
Activity 39. Triggers	128
Activity 40. Infinite Possibilities	133
Activity 41. Accepting the Process	136
Activity 42. Unconditional Love	140

a personal message

Dear Reader,

Welcome to recovery. By opening this book, you are opening yourself up to a happier and more peaceful life. You don't have to be completely convinced of this, and you don't have to be completely ready to change. As long as you are willing to consider the ideas you read about here, you are on the path to freedom.

Bulimia is a difficult opponent to face. It is sly, sneaky, and strong. But as you learn new ways to think and act, you'll find that you are even smarter and stronger. And as you are ready, you will begin to win the battles you fight, and eventually you will win a better life—one without bulimia.

This book is designed to help you become aware of and begin to change the false core beliefs that cause you to use bingeing and purging as coping skills. Right now, those behaviors might be all you have. But reading and completing the activities in this book will teach you healthier ways to cope, and you will begin to trust those ways. This trust will give you the confidence you need to recover and heal.

Each activity is introduced by an **Affirmation**. This is a positive statement about yourself and your abilities. It is likely to be in direct opposition to what you believe now. Typical bulimic thoughts are negative and foster self-hatred. Positive affirmations give you the power of truth and self-confidence, tools you can use to heal.

These six sections follow each affirmation:

Think

This section lets you consider how the affirmation applies to your own life. You will discover the thoughts and behaviors that keep you in a relationship with bulimia, and you'll practice creating new thoughts that will help you get out when you are ready.

Speak

Saying your thoughts and feelings out loud both relieves anxiety and helps you hear who you are. Sharing or discussing them with another person helps you understand yourself better and learn new information. Speaking positive affirmations and goals helps bring them to life and is a first step in making them real.

Imagine

Research has shown that your brain can't tell the difference between what's actually happening now and a memory or fantasy that you visualize. Picturing change gives you a

chance to get comfortable with it, practice it, and actually shift the brain patterns that are keeping you stuck. Visualization (paired with relaxation) lets you learn to feel comfortable with behaviors that might normally raise your anxiety. These exercises are meant to be done slowly and peacefully. Take as much time as you need to relax before, during, and after them.

Act

This section will give you the chance to bring your thoughts of change into reality. The suggested actions might mean trying real shifts in your behaviors or taking actions that are symbolic in nature. Either of these steps will help you move forward and become more comfortable in releasing bulimia.

Create

Using art materials to express your thoughts, feelings, dreams, and desires will help you release those that are holding you back and bring into reality those that will help you heal. This is not art class; you cannot do these activities incorrectly. The focus is not on creating a beautiful work of art, but on doing what feels right and good to you and on being peaceful as you work.

Transcend

The word “transcend” means “to rise above,” “to triumph over,” and “to overcome.” These activities will help you think and act from a bigger perspective. Working with nature, music, writing, love, compassion, prayer, gratitude, or just the “bigger picture,” you will connect to your inner wisdom and rise above bulimia.

Writing in a journal is a big part of these activities and of your recovery process. Your journal will be the place you record the thoughts, feelings, ideas, and observations that are a reflection of your inner self—the most valuable part of you. Your journal will help you to face and manage thoughts and feelings, and in doing so, learn how to live without using bulimic behaviors. Be prepared to find a true friend in your journal.

As you go through this book, be patient and gentle with yourself. Take your time. You can’t rush recovery any more than you can force a bud to open sooner than it is ready. This book is one tool in your journey to peace. There will be other books, people, and experiences that help you as well. Be open to healing and you will find it.

My very best to you,

Lisa M. Schab, LCSW

to the helping professional

Bulimia is a complex and confounding disorder that most cannot battle and beat on their own. The purpose of this book is to provide tools and guidance to teens seeking recovery and to the professionals working with them.

The helping professional should be aware that the multifaceted etiology of bulimia and its tendency to evolve from an unhealthy dieting method to a universal coping mechanism can cause it to take on the role of an emotional lifeline for the client, making the thought of change very frightening. Activities in this book are designed to both address the fear and bring the bulimic lifeline into awareness so that it can be consciously dismantled and a healthy lifeline created to take its place.

The activities are built on the premises of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and neuroscience, which both contend that thought patterns create behavior. When thoughts change—and with them the neural pathways in the brain—behavior can change. Each time we either observe or alter an ingrained thought pattern, we loosen the chemical connection in the brain that pairs the thought and the behavior. So the more we repeat an affirmation, apply a concept, or visualize a change, the more we are physiologically creating real change.

It has been said that we retain 10 percent of what we read, 20 percent of what we hear, 30 percent of what we see, 50 percent of what we see and hear, 70 percent of what we discuss with others, 80 percent of what we experience personally, and 95 percent of what we teach to someone else. The activities in this book have been constructed to allow for each of these experiences, helping the reader to better integrate each concept. They lend themselves well to group settings as well as individual sessions.

The activities are designed to introduce and address the false core beliefs that underlie bulimic behavior, raising readers' awareness of their thinking processes, teaching them healthier coping skills to replace bulimic behaviors, and providing them with opportunities to practice change.

Each activity begins with an initial **Affirmation**, which introduces a new thought that refutes the false core belief, and an explanation that describes the relation of the concept to bulimic behaviors. Six sections follow, allowing for integration of the information repeatedly and on different levels.

The first activity section, **Think**, helps readers to personalize the information by asking them to reflect on and record their own thoughts and behaviors related to the concept.

The **Speak** section promotes integration of the material through verbalization and discussion.

The third section, **Imagine**, helps readers to lower anxiety related to change and rehearse new behaviors in a relaxed state through visualization.

The **Act** section encourages readers to choose and act out new behaviors, whether symbolically or in real-life situations.

Create uses expressive art techniques to practice self-soothing, release affect, experience a sense of mastery, and symbolically create change and separation from bulimia.

Transcend exercises help readers see themselves and their behaviors from a bigger perspective.

Readers will experience each activity differently, according to their needs and the severity of their bulimic history. Helping professionals need to be tremendously patient, sensitive to the enormity of their client's challenge, and flexible in working with the materials herein. Be aware that the job you have taken on in helping a teen to battle bulimia can be formidable. And for that very reason, your task is vitally important. During the journey of treatment, it will be important for you to care for yourself and your own needs as well as your client's, especially if you are recovered from, or in stages of recovery from, an eating disorder yourself.

Thank you for your energy and commitment to assisting teens along the path to recovery from bulimia.

Lisa M. Schab, LCSW

notes for use of this workbook

- Each activity herein is an introduction, a beginning step, a first chance to try out a new thought or behavior. Lasting change takes time, and the reader may need to work and rework concepts many times.
- When the word “purge” is used in this book, it refers to any method of eliminating the food or calories acquired during a binge: for example, self-induced vomiting, fasting, laxatives, diuretics, or excessive exercise.
- While bulimia is diagnosed in both men and women, the incidence among women is significantly higher. This workbook may be used successfully for both genders, and an effort was made to keep the activities from being gender biased. However, as the reader will typically be a teenage girl, the workbook has been written with that in mind.
- Activities are based on general characteristics of those with bulimia. As there are always exceptions, not every activity will apply to every reader.
- The journal is an integral part of the recovery process, providing a safe holding place for all internal processes and assisting in the development of self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-trust. Readers are encouraged to journal their responses to any activities or any part of their recovery process, even when not directly asked to do so in this book.
- Each activity’s **Affirmation** states a healthy core belief that can contribute significantly to recovery. The more an affirmation is repeated, the more it will become part of the subconscious mind and the more it can help to create positive behavioral change. Therefore, even when not stated explicitly, readers are encouraged to make each affirmation part of their daily thought patterns, repeating it as often as possible, silently or out loud, to themselves or to others, until it becomes as natural and automatic as their current negative beliefs.
- The **Imagine** section is best used when the person doing the imagining is deeply relaxed, and when a second person speaks the text out loud to her. The exercise should be done slowly, taking as much time as necessary to achieve relaxation before beginning the story line. The printed text may only take one minute to read through, but the visualization is best done more slowly, taking up to ten or more minutes to complete, depending on the individual’s anxiety level. (Ideas may be repeated, paraphrased, or appropriately expanded.) Those imagining should

always be advised that they can stop the visualization process at any time should they begin to feel overwhelmed or frightened.

- The **Create** section suggests art activities that often require three-dimensional work or a variety of materials. If the suggested materials are not available, an appropriate drawing may substitute.
- Always remain aware of emotional safety, monitoring the reader's ability to manage feelings of being overwhelmed. Readers should be encouraged to cope with the tension that may come when attempting new tasks and skills yet not be pushed beyond a limit of safety.

bulimia is a false friend

1

affirmation

Bulimia pretends to be a friend—but then it violates my body, mind, and spirit.

At first it may seem like bulimia is the perfect friend: when we're down, it's there; when we're upset, it's there; when we need to escape, it's there; when we need anything, it's there. But soon we start to feel the guilt, the shame, the frustration, and the trap—and we realize the truth: bulimia gives the illusion of being a friend, and then it turns around and stabs us in the back.

In reality, bulimia is the worst friend of all. It lures us in with a smile and a promise—"Try me. I'll help you! I'll make you thin and take away your discomfort and make you feel good about yourself!" And then, once we've started trusting it, we learn the truth. Instead of helping, it's made our lives worse. Even if we are thinner, our faces are bloated or our binges are bigger or we feel less in control than ever. Instead of feeling better about ourselves, we're feeling worse. We not only don't like our bodies, we don't like our behaviors either. We do things we're ashamed of or hate ourselves for. And it gets harder and harder to stop.

The truth is that bulimia violates our bodies. It forces food into us when we're not physically hungry, stretching our stomachs beyond their capacity. Then after we're so full that we hurt, bulimia rips it back out through purging. Whatever type of purging we use, it's a violation to our bodies: vomiting, laxatives, diuretics, excessive exercise, self-induced starving—none of these is normal or healthy. The medical effects of these behaviors can cause dehydration, stomach ulcers, heart attacks, and more.

Bulimia violates our minds by taking them over. Our thoughts about eating and getting rid of food become all-encompassing. They intrude on us when we're with friends, at home, in school, in the car, and at work. We are constantly planning our next binge or purge, or regretting our last. We plan what we will eat and where we will get it. We think about the next time we can be home alone or how we will get to the bathroom at the

activity 1 * bulimia is a false friend

restaurant. We go to bed at night and wake up in the morning thinking about what we are going to do or not do with food. We can't stop the obsessive thoughts.

Bulimia violates our spirit. It sucks the energy, joy, peace, and personality right out of us. It takes away our strength and makes us dependent. It stops us from growing into the unique individuals that we've been created to become. It shoves us into a hole and doesn't let us out. Bulimia changes us from vital, energetic, amazing beings into rag dolls. It destroys our lives and our potential, our present and our future.

think

Write your story. Describe in your own words how your relationship with bulimia started and how it developed to where it is now. When you're done, go through your writing and underline in red the sentences that illustrate your former belief that bulimia was a friend. Then circle in green the sentences that illustrate the truth—that bulimia has, and will continue to, betray you.

Make a list of the ways that bulimia has violated your body, mind, and spirit.

speak

Read your story out loud to a trusted friend, counselor, or group. Or, read your story out loud to yourself.

Say today's affirmation out loud: "Bulimia pretends to be a friend, but then it violates my body, mind, and spirit." Say it repeatedly over the course of the day.

Explain to someone in your own words how you have learned that bulimia cannot be trusted. Share real examples of how it has hurt or betrayed you.

imagine

Sit comfortably and quietly and close your eyes. Let your muscles relax and your breath slow and deepen. Picture yourself in an amazingly beautiful place. Know that you are safe there. Feel the peacefulness of this place as it moves around and through you. Feel the

deep peace in your body and soul. Now picture yourself looking up and seeing something in the distance. You recognize that this is a physical representation of bulimia. Picture bulimia in whatever way your imagination creates it. See what color, shape, size, and texture it is. See it in the distance, and see it coming toward you. Know that you are safe and strong. Know that you have realized that bulimia is not a true friend. Know that you are going to end your relationship with it. Picture bulimia coming closer but stopping a safe distance away from you. Picture yourself telling bulimia that you are through with it, in whatever words you choose. Picture it trying to apologize and convince you that it really is your friend. Picture yourself not giving in, telling it “No!”, and finally convincing it to leave you. Picture it moving away from you, farther and farther, until it is completely out of sight. Feel how strong and peaceful you feel. Know that your life is going to get better and better.

Journal about how it felt to do this.

act

Look through your personal possessions—in closets, purses, your room, your home. Find something that you no longer need, something that at one time you liked but you don’t want anymore. It can be anything—a picture, a piece of jewelry, a notebook, a sweatshirt, an old toy. Make a decision to get rid of it, to release it from your life. Write or tape the word “bulimia” on this object. Take it out to the garbage and throw it in. Let this action represent your readiness to let go of bulimia in your life.

Write a good-bye letter to bulimia. Tell it that you’ve learned the truth and that you don’t want or need friends that hurt and abuse you. Tell it you’re through. Sign your name. Put the letter up somewhere where you can see it to remind you that you’re ready to end this relationship.

create

Separate yourself from bulimia—put it outside of yourself—by creating a physical representation of this false friend. How did you picture it in your visualization? A devil with horns? A seductive being? A black cloud? Using whatever materials you wish, create a three-dimensional representation of bulimia. You might use clay, old boxes or

activity 1 * bulimia is a false friend

other containers, cardboard, rocks—whatever you have available that feels right for you. Decorate this “sculpture” by adding colors or textures that express its characteristics.

When you are finished, set your sculpture in front of you. Notice that you are separate from it. Notice that it is outside of you, not a part of you. Notice how this feels. Reach out your hand and move it farther away from you. Notice how this feels. Speak to your sculpture and tell it that you no longer want it in your life. Journal about what this exercise was like for you. Keep your sculpture somewhere you can see it regularly. Whenever you see it, notice that it is separate from you.

transcend

Think of the kind of friend you want to be to others and the kind of friends you want to have in your life. List the qualities that you think are important in friendship. If you had a human friend who treated you like bulimia did, would you want to continue that friendship? Someone once said, “If you want to learn something about a person, look at the friends they keep company with.” What does keeping company with bulimia do for you?

I am a miracle 2

affirmation

I am a miracle. I deserve better than bulimia.

We were born innocent, deserving unconditional love and care. But somewhere along the way we got the idea that we weren't worthy—that we would be good enough only if we got to a certain weight or size. Bulimia reinforces this lie over and over again. It tells us that we can't trust ourselves or our bodies. It tells us that we have to lose more and more in order to be happy. It keeps us thinking that there is something wrong with us and only losing weight will fix it.

The truth is, there is no inherent goodness in a weight or size. And achieving it still won't make us feel good enough. The truth is that we are good enough right now. We are each incredible combinations of physical, mental, and spiritual gifts. Complex systems work inside us at every moment, processing solid, liquid, and chemical substances set up in perfect coordination to keep us alive and healthy. Our minds are amazing entities that not even scientists completely understand. Our souls carry the spirit of life as we move in and through the world around us. Our existence has purpose and meaning just as does every other part of nature. We are all miracles, and no size or behavior or number on the scale can change that. We still carry the innocence we were born with. We are still deserving of unconditional love and care, respect, and the chance to heal and grow and become ourselves. We all deserve better than bulimia.

think

Make a list of the ways that you think you are not good enough. Make a conscious decision to consider changing your mind about these ideas. Write a statement to yourself, declaring that you deserve better than this self-abusive, bulimic thinking, that you are a miracle and deserve to be loved.

Put your list of "not good enoughs" through a shredder.

Speak

Read your statement to someone you trust. Ask for their opinion—do they agree that you deserve better than bulimia?

Speak today's affirmation out loud while looking in the mirror: "I am a miracle; I deserve better than bulimia."

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably, close your eyes, and relax your muscles. As you breathe in and out, let all the tension leave your body. Remind yourself that you are safe and secure. When you feel comfortable, picture what you looked like as a tiny baby. Look at the softness of your skin, the innocence in your eyes, the way your tiny fingers move. Look at how sweet and pure you are. Look at your tiny, soft eyelashes, at the tiny drop of your earlobe, and the curve of your lips. Look at the soft, new hair on your head and the sweet little tip of your nose. Think about all that is going on inside you—a heart is pumping blood to every organ; milk and baby food are being transformed into hundreds of diverse cells, each thriving and doing its special job. Just as in your body now, each inhalation is carrying oxygen to every inch of your body, and each exhalation is removing toxins from your system. Your newly formed brain is directing your eyes to see and comprehend, and your voice to cry when you have a need. It is helping you grasp the hand that reaches out to yours and suck on the nipple that provides you with nourishment. The spirit within you is alive and just beginning its journey. As you look at this tiny baby that is your beginning, see it with love and compassion. See the truth of the miracle and know that this little life is good—absolutely good enough—and worthy and deserving of all good things. In your mind, send the little baby love and notice what this feels like. Spend a few minutes just sitting in the presence of the baby that is you, reminding yourself that you are good enough.

Journal about what this was like for you.

act

With permission, spend some time with a baby—a sibling, a relative, or maybe a friend's or neighbor's child. If you can, hold and interact with this infant. Pay attention to its looks, sounds, and smells and to what it physically feels like. Be aware of the miracle of life that is in your presence. Know that you were the same little miracle when you were born, and you still are now. The same amazing processes that are working in this baby are working within you, too. Know that this tiny baby is worthy and deserving of love, and so are you. No matter how different you are in age or size, you share the energy and the journey of life; feel the connection between you. Send love and compassion to the baby and yourself.

If you are not able to interact with a real baby, look at photographs of infants—those you know, or even pictures in magazines, and think about the suggestions above.

create

Tape a photograph of yourself as a baby anywhere on an 8 1/2" x 11" or larger piece of paper. If you do not have a photo, draw a likeness of yourself. Decorate the space around your picture with love—use crayons, paints, yarn, sparkles, stickers, hearts, or whatever feels good to you. Create a loving gift to the little child in the picture. Somewhere on the paper write the words: "I am a miracle" and "I am good enough." Put your picture somewhere you can see it daily.

transcend

Sit some place in nature that you enjoy, or sit at a window looking out at a natural scene. Spend a few moments looking at the miracles around you, and think about the incredible processes that are maintaining the life you see. Close your eyes and think about the same miracle within yourself. Feel your union with the natural world. Feel the goodness in the entire universe and in yourself.

3 a new lifeline

affirmation

I am creating a new lifeline—one based on truth and health.

Bulimia can feel like a lifeline—a strong, thick rope that we cling to for safety. At first we hang on to it just to lose weight. Then we start bingeing or purging to feel in control. Soon we start using it to escape any discomfort. Eventually we use bulimia to express anger or pain, relieve guilt or tension, reward ourselves, punish ourselves, feel drama, feel peace, rebel—and on and on. Each of these uses becomes another “coping cord” in the unhealthy bulimic lifeline. The more we use it, the more cords we add and the stronger it becomes.

When we depend on bingeing and purging to regulate our lives, it can feel scary to consider giving it up. The thought of facing ourselves and our lives without bulimia may seem impossible. But the bulimic lifeline can be dismantled. As we learn better ways to care for ourselves, we will create a new lifeline from healthy coping skills such as honesty, rational thinking, inner peace, managing feelings, assertiveness, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-respect, self-confidence, and self-love.

The dysfunction of bulimia cannot survive in the face of these stronger, healthier ways of living. As we learn and practice our new skills, we will feel the cords of our new lifeline growing and we will gain the confidence to drop the bulimic lifeline from our grasp.

think

Think about what purposes bulimic behaviors serve for you. After each purpose—or cord in your lifeline—write the truth about how bulimia has actually hurt or betrayed you. For example, if one of your cords is “Bulimia helps me feel in control,” you might write about how bulimia has actually started to control you—how there are times you feel you cannot stop the behaviors even if you want to.

Speak

Read the truth about each of your cords out loud to yourself. If possible, read them to another person you trust. Repeat today's affirmation out loud to yourself. Write it on a sticky note and put it somewhere you will see it every day. Whenever possible, read it out loud each time you see it.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Take a relaxing, cleansing breath and let yourself become peaceful. When you are ready, picture a strong cord running from the back of your heart down to the center of the earth. This is the lifeline you have created with bulimia. You see that it is made of dishonesty and dysfunction; you know that it is unhealthy and destructive. Notice that it feels cold and has sharp thorns all along its edges. Decide what color you would make this cord, and picture it that way. Now picture a second cord running from the front of your heart down to the center of the earth. This is the new lifeline you are creating with healthy coping skills and self-love. You see that it is made of true inner strength. You know that it is safe and will bring you peace and joy. Notice that it feels warm and comforting. Decide what color you would make this cord, and picture it that way. Now picture yourself wearing heavy gloves and reaching for the thorny bulimic cord to remove it. As you grasp it, you see it narrow, weaken, and begin to disappear. When you grasp it again at another place, it narrows, weakens, and disappears some more. You also see that each time part of the bulimic cord disappears, the healthy cord grows stronger. You begin to pull the bulimic cord out of the earth and out of your heart. You continue grasping and pulling until it is completely destroyed. If you feel any anxiety as you picture this, look at the strength of your new cord and know that it will not let you be hurt. When you have completely destroyed the bulimic cord, take off your gloves and sit quietly for a few minutes, feeling the peace and security of the new cord that is glowing at the front of your heart. Breathe quietly and slowly, and feel the safety of your new, healthy lifeline.

Journal your reactions to this exercise.

act

Hold a small amount of sugar or sand in your nondominant hand. This represents the unhealthy bulimic lifeline that you used to cling to. Hold a stone (or a fruit or vegetable) in your dominant hand. This represents the healthy new lifeline you are creating within yourself. Squeeze the sugar tightly. Think about how you used to hold tightly to bulimia, thinking it was the answer to your problems. Now grasp the stone more firmly. Feel how solid it is compared to the sugar. Think about your goal of letting go of the bulimic lifeline and trusting a healthier lifestyle. Take a few relaxing breaths, and when you feel comfortable, gradually open your hand with the sugar in it. Move your fingers so that the sugar begins to sift through them, falling from your hand. As you let go of the sugar, focus on the strength of the stone in your other hand. Continue to hold the stone firmly as you let all of the sugar fall through your fingers. Think about how you will be able to let go of your bulimic lifeline because you will have a healthy new lifeline to hang on to. Journal about how it feels to think about exchanging the old lifeline for the new.

create

Create a physical representation of your new lifeline by cutting ten or more twelve-inch strands of colored lanyard or yarn. Make a tag for each strand, labeling them "honesty," "rational thinking," "inner peace," "managing feelings," "assertiveness," "self-awareness," "self-acceptance," "self-respect," "self-confidence," and "self-love." Add more strands labeled with your own ideas for healthy coping skills, if you wish. Tie the strands together securely at one end, then weave their lengths together in whatever pattern you like, so that they form one strong, larger strand. As you work, think about the new lifeline you are creating inside of yourself. When you are finished, tie the other ends together securely. Keep your lifeline in a place where you can reach it easily. Each day, take it out and hold it. Familiarize yourself with the feel of it; remind yourself of its strength.

transcend

Make a list of the many things you have already let go of in your life. When you were a small child, you held your parent's hand when you crossed the street; now you can do it on your own. You used to ride a tricycle or maybe had training wheels; now you can ride a bike with confidence. Letting go of the old and growing stronger is a natural part of the life cycle. Remind yourself that letting go of bulimia and creating a new lifeline will enable you to become stronger in all areas of your life. Share your list with someone you trust.

4 steps toward change

affirmation

I can take small, safe steps toward change.

The thought of changing our behaviors can feel frightening at first. Even though we don't like the pain of bulimia, it is a familiar pain. We may not like the binge-purge-guilt pattern. But even if we hate it, it is a pattern we know. It is predictable. We know how to make it happen and how it feels at each stage. We may be spinning our wheels, but they are spinning in a familiar rut. We don't know what it would feel like to get out of this rut. We are afraid that it might feel even worse.

We can gather the courage to change when we realize that real change comes slowly—like winter turning to spring or the sun rising at dawn. We didn't begin bulimic thinking overnight, and we will release it gradually as well.

We will let go of our old bulimic behaviors a little at a time as we are ready. First, we will learn new coping skills to create our new lifeline. Next, we will start feeling safer and stronger as we practice these skills in our daily life. As we build it and use it, we will gain confidence in this new lifeline. And when we no longer need them, we will let go of our bulimic thoughts and behaviors one by one.

think

Make a list of all the changes you have already successfully experienced in your life, from the smallest to the biggest. Include everything you can think of: changing from crawling to walking, from crying to talking, from first grade to second, from one school to another. Did you ever redecorate your bedroom or get a new hairstyle or make a new friend? Did you move to a new home or graduate? All of these changes were made one small step at a time.

Speak

Look in a mirror, look yourself in the eye, and repeat today's affirmation out loud: "I can take small, safe steps toward change." Read out loud the list of the changes you have already made in your life. Read out loud: "I am capable of change. I don't have to rush. I can take small, safe steps toward change as I feel ready."

Imagine

Sit comfortably and quietly and close your eyes. Take a few relaxing, cleansing breaths. Let your whole body relax, muscle by muscle. Now picture yourself in a very safe, peaceful place. This may be a place where you have really been, or it may be a place that you create in your mind. Notice the safety of your surroundings, and notice the feeling of security within you. Know that you have nothing to be afraid of in this place. When you feel very calm, picture your anxiety level rising a little. Notice your thoughts turning to bingeing or purging. Then picture yourself taking a deep breath and speaking out loud: "I am safe. I don't need bulimia anymore. I can make a change." See yourself breathing deeply and repeating these words slowly and calmly until all of your anxiety is gone. Notice how happy you feel to have managed anxiety without bingeing or purging.

Journal about how you feel.

Act

Practice the process of change by doing things differently in your daily life. Try eating dinner holding the fork with your nondominant hand. Or sit in a different chair to watch TV. If you usually brush your upper teeth first, try brushing the lower ones first, or vice versa. Try sleeping with your head at the foot of your bed and your feet at the head. When you get up in the morning, try getting out of bed on the opposite side than you usually do. Do anything else you can think of to try something a little different. This will show your body and your brain that you are capable of change. Write in your journal about how it felt to make changes in what you are used to doing.

create

On a large piece of smooth poster board or fingerpaint paper, draw the outline of a caterpillar and the butterfly that it will turn into. Give your butterfly beautiful, large, flowing wings. Let it take up most of the paper. Using a medium that allows you to mix colors, sprinkle droplets of bright colors onto the butterfly's wings. Then using your fingers or another tool, start moving the colors toward and into each other. Watch as blue and yellow change to green, red and blue change to purple. Take your time and enjoy creating the change in colors and beauty in the butterfly. Think about the caterpillar's ability to change into a butterfly and your ability to create change in the colors and in yourself.

transcend

Change is an ongoing, natural condition of life. The tree outside your window is never the same twice—the leaves change color, new branches grow, the bark changes its texture. No animal or plant is ever exactly the same from day to day, and neither are you. Every cell in your body is breathing, renewing, and moving on at each moment. As hard as we try, we cannot stop it. When you decide to make a change in your life, you are acting with the flow of the universe. You are letting the miracle of life work within you and through you. Letting go of bulimia is a change that will help you to soar like a butterfly. Journal about your reaction to this truth.

a power greater than bulimia

5

affirmation

There is a power greater than bulimia, and I align myself with it.

Trying to stop bulimic behaviors can leave us feeling discouraged, helpless, frustrated, angry, or scared. Battling bulimia is a hard job, and at times it may feel as if we are powerless over our thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. We may feel weak or helpless compared to bulimia. We may feel like failures when we have tried over and over to change but still can't.

It is normal to feel these feelings when we try to fight something that seems bigger than ourselves. But we need to remember that there is a power even greater than bulimia. When we look around, we can see the evidence of something bigger—we can see life energy in the form of animals, birds, insects, flowers, trees, oceans, clouds, sunshine, rain, stars, and other human beings. The power that created all of these forms is far bigger and more powerful than bulimia. It is the same power that created us.

People have different ideas about this power and call it by different names. They act out their beliefs in different ways. It doesn't matter how we think about it. What matters is that we can align ourselves with it and use its strength to change. We can harness its energy, ride on its wings, and allow it to help us move beyond bulimia. Depending on what we believe, we might align ourselves with this power in one of the following ways, or in other ways that feel right for us:

- praying for help, guidance, or strength to make the changes that we need to grow and heal
- spending time in or near places where we feel this power the most—that might be a formal place of worship, a place outdoors, or maybe just alone in a quiet room
- releasing our own thoughts and ideas and taking on the wisdom of the greater power

activity 5 * a power greater than bulimia

- acting on the guidelines of our faith traditions when making decisions about our behavior
- feeling our connection to this greater power as we go through our day
- claiming the deep peace or wisdom of this power at times when we are struggling with bulimic behaviors

Aligning ourselves with a power greater than bulimia is a new coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

What was here first: the planet Earth or bulimia?

What was here first: the rising and setting sun or bulimia?

What was here first: the miracle of life or bulimia?

What was here first: you or the bulimic behaviors you use?

Circle any of the words below that describe ways that you think about a power greater than bulimia:

spirit	life	peace	love
nature	God	energy	eternity
hope	soul	divinity	holiness
miracles	gratitude	faith	heart

In your journal, write more detail about your ideas and beliefs.

Speak

Share your beliefs with a faith leader or someone else you trust. Talk with that person about the fact that there is a power greater than bulimia in the world. Talk about ways you could align yourself with that power to help yourself heal. Say today's affirmation out loud whenever you think of it: "There is a power greater than bulimia, and I align myself with it." Feel what it feels like to believe you have the strength of this power to help you.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Relax your body and let your breath flow naturally. As you breathe in and out, remind yourself that you are safe and secure. When you feel ready, picture yourself outdoors on a beautiful day. See yourself in the middle of a field, or someplace else with a lot of space around you. See the clear blue sky, the green grass or blue water, and the peaceful landforms in the distance. Now picture a speck in the sky. As it comes closer, you see that it is a bird—a large, strong bird with a peaceful look. Its eyes look at you; they are kind and wise. The bird is larger than any you've ever seen—larger than you. But as it lands near you, you are not at all afraid. You feel very safe in its presence. The bird looks toward you and then toward its back, and you know it is offering you a ride. You have a strong knowing that the bird is your helper, and you don't hesitate to climb onto its back. When you are settled, it once again takes off in flight. You feel comfortable and relaxed as you watch the ground move away and the sky become closer. You are amazed at the strength of the bird's body and wings and at how easily it carries you. You feel its power, and you feel that power flowing through you. You know that as long as you need it, this bird will carry you. As you are carried by the bird's strong body, you feel its strength within you. You feel very sure that a power greater than bulimia can help you leave the eating disorder behind.

Journal about your feelings.

Act

If you belong to a particular faith organization, talk with a leader or other member in your group or place of worship. Ask questions or get any information you may need to

activity 5 * a power greater than bulimia

help you better understand yourself in relation to your beliefs. You don't have to share your story of bulimia unless you feel comfortable doing so. If you do not belong to an organized group, look in a library or bookstore or on the Internet for information on spirituality, and find something to read that you connect with. Try going to a meeting of Overeaters Anonymous to learn about how people in a twelve-step program use their belief in a higher power to heal from their disordered eating patterns. Spend time outside, really looking closely at the natural world and raising your awareness of the miracle of all creation and a greater power.

create

Collect items from the natural world—leaves, stones, berries, twigs, feathers, petals, shells, bark, or whatever attracts you. Arrange and then glue the items onto a piece of cardboard to create a collage. Add anything else that represents your belief in a power greater than bulimia—religious symbols; photographs; magazine pictures; words, verses, or phrases from books in your faith tradition.

transcend

Spend ten minutes or more in a breath meditation. Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Let all the tension leave your body and remind yourself that you are safe. Do not try to change your breath, but simply pay attention to it. Think about how the air moving in and throughout your body, touching every cell, connects you to every other person and every other living thing—both plant and animal. Think about how this life-giving breath connects you to a power that is greater than bulimia.

affirmation

There is peace at the core of my being.

We may think that we will feel peace only if we lose weight. We may think that bulimia is the only way to destroy everything we hate about ourselves, and when we do, we'll finally feel good. We may think that bingeing and purging is the only way to fix our stress.

The truth is that bulimia is the opposite of peace. Bulimia is negativity, anxiety, self-loathing, frustration, and anger in action. It can never bring us peace because it is not peaceful to push from one destructive behavior to the next.

We can find true peace only when we look for it in a new place: inside ourselves. We might not understand how there can be peace inside us when it feels more like storms. But the truth is there is peace at the core of our beings; we just cover it up with anxious thoughts and feelings. It is hard to feel peaceful when we are thinking about how we hate our bodies, don't have enough friends, or didn't get a perfect grade. When the artist Michelangelo was asked how he created the magnificent statue of David from a crude block of marble, he replied that David was already deep within the stone—all he did was chip away the excess. When we chip away the negativity and access the deepest part of ourselves, we will find peace, just like Michelangelo found the David.

Connecting to our peace is a healthy cord in our new lifeline. Nobody who is feeling deeply peaceful binges and purges.

think

Make a list of the negative thoughts that bury your inner peace under negativity: for example, "I won't be happy until I lose five more pounds," "I'll never be good enough," "My parents always favor my sister/brother," "I hate myself."

Now rewrite your thoughts to create statements that bring up peace in you. For example, "I won't be happy until I lose five more pounds" can be changed to "I can find something to feel happy about right now, no matter what I weigh." You might not believe the new statements yet, but write them anyway. After you've rewritten your thoughts, put the negative ones through a shredder.

Speak

Write a statement declaring your intention to start acknowledging and connecting with your inner peace. It might sound something like: "I know that there is peace within me. I am going to remember this more often and notice when I am covering up my peace with negativity." Read your statement out loud to someone you trust. Repeat today's affirmation out loud as often as you think of it.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Take a few deep, cleansing breaths and let your muscles relax. When you are ready, take your attention inward. Imagine that you are able to see deep down inside your body, and look at all the negative thoughts or feelings in there. Notice how high that pile is. Look toward the bottom of that pile and see your inner peace, glowing. How do you picture that peace that is deep within you? Maybe it is a flow of energy; maybe it has a specific form. Notice what color it is and what shape it has. Notice that as you focus on your inner peace, it grows stronger. Keep your attention on it, and continue to take relaxing breaths as you acknowledge its presence within you. Now notice a small switch near your inner peace. The switch is labeled Cleanse. You reach over and flick the switch, and when you do, you see that all of the negative thoughts and feelings piled on top of your peace begin to move, as if they are being stirred by a calm breeze. You see how they are detaching and gently and slowly moving up and away from your peace. As they move away, your inner peace glows brighter and grows stronger. You watch the negativity move easily out of your body and dissolve into the air until no trace of it is left. Your inner peace is uncovered. You feel its serenity and tranquility within you. Continue to focus on the glow of your peace as long as you are comfortable. When you are ready, bring your attention back to the external world.

Journal your reactions to this exercise.

act

Go to a busy shopping mall or department store. Find a place to sit where you won't be disturbed or disturb anyone else. Watch what is going on; notice the hustle and bustle, the movement, and the noise. Pay attention to your breath and relax your muscles. Make a conscious effort to separate yourself from the busyness all around you. Feel the peace within yourself. Imagine that this busyness represents what covers up your peace, and you represent the peace deep within you. Try to feel peace welling up deep inside you. Continue to take relaxing breaths. Spend five minutes or more connecting with and "being" your inner peace. Journal your reactions to this exercise.

create

Choosing colors that feel peaceful to you, use regular wax crayons to color a piece of white drawing paper, completely covering the space so that no white area shows through. You may color any design that feels good to you. As you color, press hard to create a thick layer of crayon. Then paint over your peaceful colors with black paint. Cover the entire page. When the black paint has dried, use a knife or fork to scrape away bits of it, revealing the peaceful color underneath. Think about how you can scrape away negative thoughts to find the peace deep below.

transcend

Find some music that feels peaceful to you. Try listening to it before you go to sleep at night. Lie quietly and imagine that the peace of the music is connecting to and strengthening the peace within you. Let yourself feel a tranquil vibration flowing through your body. If negative thoughts come into your mind, let them dissolve into the music and replace them with positive thoughts.

7 peace through my breath

affirmation

I find peace through my breath.

We don't usually think about our breath. We just assume that life-giving oxygen will move in and out of our body moment by moment, day by day, without any direction from us. But paying attention to our breath can help us connect to our inner peace and let go of bulimia.

Our breath can help us to regulate the tension in our body. When we breathe deeply and slowly, we furnish oxygen to every muscle, organ, and cell, which helps our body relax. When we breathe more shallowly and rapidly, we get little oxygen to our muscles and we remain tense.

Our breath also moves oxygen to our brain. Deep, slow breathing helps us to think clearly and make wise, rational choices. Shallow, rapid breathing leads to poor, impulsive decisions that we later regret. When we are bingeing and purging, we are usually breathing shallowly and rapidly.

Our breath can be used as a tool to help clear away the negativity that covers our peace and raises our anxiety. When we learn to use our breath to relax and think clearly, it can help us let go of bulimic thoughts and behaviors. Always with us, free of charge, ready to work for us, our breath is a new coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Using a felt-tipped marker, write your old beliefs about anxiety or stress on squares of bathroom tissue. These might include thoughts like: "I can't relax," "I feel so much pressure to lose weight," "I need to binge and purge to calm down," or "I am just a hyper person." These are ideas that cover up your inner peace. Take a few deep breaths to help your muscles relax and your brain to think clearly. Think about the possibility of letting these beliefs go. Then say good-bye to your stressful thought and flush the tissue squares

down the toilet. As you flush each old thought, take a calming breath and make the choice to feel peaceful. Journal about what this experience was like for you.

Speak

Sit quietly and comfortably and let yourself relax. Take one slow, deep, peaceful breath in, and say out loud, "I find peace." Then release that breath, and when it is completely out, say, "through my breath." Repeat this process several times. Try not to pressure yourself, but relax slowly into the breath and the words.

Imagine

Sit quietly and close your eyes. Relax your muscles and let the tension leave your body. Think of a color that represents peace to you. As you breathe in peacefully, picture your breath bringing that color into your body. Each time you inhale, picture the color moving in a little deeper, filling your head, chest, stomach, arms, hips, and legs. Continue to breathe quietly until you can imagine this peaceful color in every part of your body, all the way out to your fingertips, your toes, and the top of your head. Allow the color of your breath to relax every cell within you. Then let the color flow out into the air surrounding you. Feel as if this peaceful color is holding you in a safe, warm, cushion. With each breath, feel your peace grow deeper. Know that you are safe.

Journal about what this was like for you.

Act

Try each of these breathing exercises at least once. Know that any of these may feel very strange at first if you are not used to paying attention to your breath. For the next week, spend at least five minutes each day doing any one of the breathing exercises you learn in this activity. Journal about how this affects your brain and your body.

1. Following Your Breath

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes, relaxing your muscles. Put your attention on your breath. Don't try to change it, but simply locate it. Try to find

activity 7 * peace through my breath

the air flow that nourishes your body and sustains your life. Notice where it goes in and out of your body and how the air feels as it enters and leaves. Continue to follow your breath for a few minutes. Notice if it goes into your nose, mouth, throat, chest, or deeper. Notice how the air feels as it moves. Notice if your chest or stomach rises and falls or if your mouth opens. Notice any sound that your breath makes. Watch your breath without judgment. Simply accept whatever it is doing.

2. Calming Your Breath

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes, relaxing your muscles. When you feel peaceful, inhale through your nose, taking as deep a breath as you possibly can without pressuring yourself. Hold that breath in for one or two seconds. Then let the breath out through your mouth, as slowly as you can. Repeat this pattern three or four times.

create

Listen to soothing, peaceful music while you move crayons, pastels, or paint back and forth over a large piece of white poster board. Choose colors that are peaceful to you. Instead of trying to create a particular picture, just let your color strokes flow with your breath, slowing and deepening your inhalations as you cover the paper. Instead of thinking about a finished project, simply enjoy the process of moving peaceful color across the paper in coordination with your breath. Continue until you feel completely tranquil and relaxed.

transcend

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes, relaxing your muscles. Notice your breath as it flows in and out of your body. Think about your breath being a true friend that will create a healthy cord in your new lifeline. As you notice your breath, send it gratitude and love. Thank it for healing you and sustaining you. Continue sending your breath love and gratitude as you inhale and exhale until you feel peaceful.

peace through thoughts and images

8

affirmation

I find peace through the thoughts and images in my mind.

Sometimes it can feel like we have no control over our actions—as if our bodies have a will of their own. Suddenly we are eating something we didn’t want to eat and we don’t know why. It can seem impossible to believe there is any peace inside of us.

Bulimia wants us to think we have no control so that we will give up the fight for health and just keep bingeing and purging. But the truth is, there *is* peace within us, and we can connect to it through the thoughts and images in our minds. Our bodies are designed to follow what our minds tell them. When we choose peaceful thoughts and images, we feel relaxed. When we choose anxious thoughts and images, we feel tense.

If we tell ourselves, “I’m so upset, I can’t stand it!” our bodies become tense. If we tell ourselves, “I’m so upset, but I know I can calm down and get through this,” our bodies will relax. Likewise, if we picture something we consider terrible, our bodies will tense. If we picture something we consider wonderful, our bodies will relax.

Our minds can lead us to our inner peace. We do not feel real peace and practice bulimic behaviors at the same time. Consciously choosing peaceful thoughts and images becomes another coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Make a list of the thoughts you choose that cause your body to become tense. These might be thoughts such as “My stomach is so big I look like I’m pregnant,” “My thighs are huge,” “I can’t do anything right,” or “I’ll never get into college.”

Make a list of the thoughts you choose that cause your body to relax (for example, “I look really good in this outfit,” “This is the first day of vacation,” or “I’m a good skier”).

Speak

Read your list of tensing thoughts out loud. Pay close attention to your tension level, and notice what happens in your body when you read and think these thoughts. Rate your tension on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being low and 10 being high.

Read your list of relaxing thoughts out loud. Again, pay close attention to your tension level, and notice what happens in your body when you read and think these thoughts. Rate your tension on a scale from 1 to 10.

Repeat today's affirmation out loud several times, paying attention to what it really means. Journal about what it was like for you to do this exercise.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Rate your anxiety level on a scale from 1 to 10. Jot down your number so you can remember it later. Now start to relax your muscles. Let your breath slow and deepen as you release all tension from your body. When you feel at ease, picture yourself in the most beautiful, peaceful place you have ever seen. This might be a real place you have actually visited, or it might be a place you create in your imagination. As you picture yourself in this place, look around you and notice what you see. Notice that every color, shape, line, and texture help you to feel peaceful and serene. Listen to the sounds of this place. Notice that everything you hear is harmonious and melodic, adding to your serenity. Notice what you feel on your skin. It might be the texture of your clothing; it might be the air caressing you as it moves past. Whatever you feel, it is gentle and soft, adding to your sense of peace. Notice any fragrances present. As you inhale, you observe how pleasant they are. You breathe in deeply to drink them in. Notice if there are any tastes present in your mouth. If you taste anything, notice what a positive feeling it brings to you. The taste in your mouth helps you to relax even more deeply. With all of your senses tuned in to beauty and peace, take a few minutes to just enjoy your experience of this wonderful setting. Soak it in as you notice your breath moving in and out, increasing your sense of deep relaxation. Before you end your mental vacation, rate your anxiety level on a scale from 1 to 10 one more time. Compare this rating to your first. Notice if the image in your mind has affected the level of your tension.

When you are done, journal about what it was like to do this exercise.

act

Spend a couple of hours looking at everything negatively. Think negative thoughts about yourself and everything that happens to you. No matter what you are doing, choose thoughts that raise your tension level. Notice how your body responds. Journal about your experience.

Next, spend a couple of hours looking at everything positively. Think positive thoughts about yourself and everything that happens to you. No matter what you are doing, choose thoughts that lower your tension level. Notice how your body responds. Journal about your experience.

create

Cut out two eight-inch cardboard circles. Cut about six inches from the middle of each circle so that you are left with a ring. Tape one color of plastic wrap to cover the opening of one circle. Tape a second color of plastic wrap to cover the opening of the second circle. Designate one circle your positive viewer and the other circle your negative viewer.

Write today's affirmation around the rim of the positive viewer. Spend five to ten minutes looking at the world around you through the positive viewer. Tell yourself positive thoughts about everything you see. Then spend five to ten minutes with the negative viewer, choosing negative thoughts this time. Repeat this several times during the next week. Journal about how this affects your body, mind, and spirit.

transcend

Pretend someone who loves you unconditionally is looking at your body exactly as it is today. Describe in detail all the positive attributes this person would see in your physical form.

9 peace through meditation

affirmation

I find peace through meditation.

When our minds are being run by bulimia, we race from one dysfunctional thought to the next:

I am so fat. I have to start a new diet, now—no, tomorrow—if I start tomorrow I can eat tonight—for the last time—this time I'll do it for sure—I'll drink only juice for two days, then I'll eat only fruit and soup for five days—I know for sure I can do it this time—so tonight I can get ice cream—double fudge—and those soft sugar cookies—and milk—and chocolate—and some of those little pizzas—I could go to the drive-through for fries—I can get rid of it all afterward—I have to drink enough water—I am going to be so skinny starting tomorrow—I will lose all this weight so fast—this time will be so different—then I'll buy that outfit in the smallest size—I am going to look so good—I'll bet I can lose ten pounds in a week—I am going to get ice cream right now.

Part of what keeps the bulimic cycle going is the pattern we have set up in our brains. When the thought “I’m so fat” is always followed by “I have to start a new diet” and then “I’ll binge one last time” and “I can get rid of it,” this is the pathway that gets set up between the cells in our brains. The more we repeat this pattern, the stronger the connection gets and the harder it is to change. The bulimic behaviors become more and more ingrained.

These thinking patterns cover up our peace. They get woven so thick that we can’t see past them. But we can dismantle them by teaching our brain a new pattern. Meditation trains our brain to leave bulimic thoughts and come back to rational thoughts.

Some people think meditation is only for monks on mountaintops. The truth is, meditation is a brain exercise that can be practiced by anyone. Just like lifting weights will strengthen our physical muscles, meditation will strengthen our brain’s ability to let go of bulimic thoughts. Like lifting weights, we have to practice meditation on a regular basis for it to work. We can use meditation to find our inner peace. It is another coping cord in our new, healthy lifeline.

think

Make a list of the thoughts that keep you stuck in the bulimic cycle. These might include ideas like “I can’t stop thinking about my weight,” “I can’t think about anything but food,” “I have to get rid of anything I eat,” or “I hate my body.”

When you are done, leave the list in one place and begin to walk away from it. Move farther and farther away from those thoughts, finally turning around to face away from them. Move to a completely different room. Now copy the following list onto a new piece of paper:

I am training my mind to leave distraction.

I am training my mind to return to peace.

I can leave bulimic thoughts behind.

I can leave distraction and come back to peace.

I find peace through meditation.

Add any other thoughts that would be helpful to you.

When you are done, go back to the first list, look at it, and then walk away from it again, physically leaving your bulimic thoughts behind.

speak

Read your list of new thoughts out loud to yourself or someone else. Repeat today’s affirmation out loud as many times as you think of it during the day. Remind yourself that this is the truth—you *can* train your mind to leave bulimic thinking and come back to peace.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably, closing your eyes and relaxing your muscles. Focus on your breath for a few minutes until you feel peaceful. Now pretend that you are taking an expedition to the inside of your brain. As you walk into the “room” that houses your

brain, you notice a big machine on the left that is labeled Bulimic Thoughts. You see that the machine is running at a fast pace, working hard. You see another machine on the right, labeled Peaceful Thoughts. This machine is currently off. In the middle of the room, you notice a third machine, labeled Behavior, that has a viewing screen. In the screen you can see yourself bingeing and purging. This machine is hooked up to both of the other machines. Think about how you feel as you watch yourself bingeing and purging. Picture yourself making a conscious decision to walk to the Bulimic Thoughts machine and pull down hard on the lever that turns it off. As soon as you do this, the viewing screen goes blank. Now picture yourself walking to the Peaceful Thoughts machine, and push up hard on the lever that turns it on. As soon as you do this, the viewing screen lights up again. On the screen you see yourself walking away from binge food with a peaceful smile on your face. You look confident and calm. A neon sign lights up at the top of the room, flashing the words “Leaving bulimic thoughts, returning to peace,” over and over. When you read the sign, you know that you are capable of finding your peace through the meditation exercise of leaving distraction and returning to peace.

Journal about your feelings.

act

The basic steps to meditation are very simple:

1. Choose something for your mind to focus on that brings you a feeling of peace. This could be a word or phrase, a picture or scene, or simply your breath. Sometimes people choose words or pictures from nature or with a spiritual orientation. Use whatever feels right for you. You might have to try several choices before you decide which is best.
2. Sit quietly and comfortably, close your eyes, and relax your body. Put your attention on your peaceful item.
3. When you notice that your mind has wandered—*which it always will*—simply notice that—*without judgment*—and then bring your mind back to the peaceful item.
4. Repeat this process of focusing on peace, noticing distraction without judgment, and moving back to peace over and over. Start by trying this for three or four minutes per day. Work up to five minutes. Add a few more minutes when you are

comfortable, and eventually work up to twenty minutes. Know that it may take weeks to build your meditation time. There is no rush. Be patient with yourself.

Remember that your mind's wandering is inevitable—this does not mean you cannot meditate. The core of meditation is the process of bringing your mind back from distraction. As you go through this process, journal about your experiences.

create

Create a special meditation space for yourself. It might be in your own room or another area of your home where you can have some privacy, or at least some time alone when you meditate. Carefully choose the items you would like with you in this space. Think about what would add to your sense of peace or concentration. You might want to include a particular cushion to sit on or lean against, or a blanket to cover yourself with. You might want a candle, a plant, some flowers, or other natural items. You might want a tranquil picture or peaceful music. You might want to face a beautiful view or look at something else peaceful. Add any objects that represent peace to you so that you are surrounded by serenity when you sit down to meditate.

transcend

Try meditating with another person or group of people. Experience the serenity of more than one person focusing on peace at the same time. Journal about your experience.

10 peace through mindfulness

affirmation

I find peace by focusing on the present moment.

The feeling of being overwhelmed develops when we take too much of the future or the past into our minds at once, like when we look at our assignment notebooks and see all of the tests next week and the English and math homework we haven't finished and the history paper and science lab we haven't started and realize we also have to babysit this weekend and do our community service project and go to a party Friday night and visit our grandparents, and it seems like there is so much to do and so little time and so much pressure and we are a failure because we can never do it all.

Or when we look back and think about the stupid comment we made in the hallway this morning and we're sure everyone heard and probably are all thinking we're totally nerdy and probably talking about us right now and if we'd only just shut up or said something better or just not gone to school at all today or were smarter or funnier or thinner, this never would have happened.

When we don't know a better way to handle it, feeling overwhelmed can lead to bingeing and purging in a heartbeat. A healthier coping skill is simply to *come back to the present moment and experience it without judgment*. Putting our attention only on what we are doing right at this instant clears the mountain of future and past thoughts off of our inner peace. For example, right at this moment, all you have to do is read these words—that's all.

Focusing on the present moment without judgment is called mindfulness. When we are being mindful, we can find our peace again. Acting mindfully is a coping cord in our new, healthy lifeline.

think

Over the next few days, notice times when your mind moves into the future or the past and you feel overwhelmed. Bring yourself back to the present by focusing on your five

senses: what are you seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting right now? For example, if you are in your first period class worrying about the test in your second period class, come back to the present by focusing on the student's head in front of you, what the teacher is saying, the smell of chalk, your hard desk seat, and the taste of your gum. Journal about how this thought shift affects your anxiety level.

Speak

As you go through your daily activities, practice present-moment awareness by repeating one phrase out loud that describes what you are doing at that moment. For example, if you are walking, repeat out loud, "Walking, I am walking, walking, I am walking...." If you are showering, say out loud, "Showering, I am showering..." or "Washing, I am washing...." Each time you speak, observe your activity with acceptance rather than judgment. This exercise might feel very strange at first, but it will help you and your brain get used to the idea of mindfulness. After today, continue to practice this exercise, but say the phrases silently.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Let your muscles relax. When you feel peaceful, picture yourself in a situation that often brings up stress in you and leads to bingeing or purging. Picture yourself starting to feel anxious and notice where you feel the anxiety in your body. See yourself taking quiet, peaceful breaths, keeping your focus on the present moment, noticing your anxiety without judgment, and just letting it pass through you. Notice the thoughts you are telling yourself that are raising your anxiety. See yourself taking quiet peaceful breaths, staying in the present moment, and listening to your thoughts without judgment, allowing them to float in one side of your mind and out the other. Finally notice yourself feeling the urge to binge or purge. See yourself taking quiet, peaceful breaths, staying in the present moment, and experiencing that urge without judgment. See yourself allowing that urge to flow through you and then release and dissolve. Picture yourself noticing the urge without acting on it. Take a few peaceful cleansing breaths and then repeat this exercise again from the beginning.

Journal about how it felt to do this.

act

Try doing each of the following activities mindfully (with attention to your senses in the present moment and without judgment). This will mean that you move far more slowly than you usually do. Journal about your experience when you are done.

Eat a raisin.

Smell a flower.

Pet an animal.

Wash a dish.

Brush your teeth.

Wiggle your fingers.

Stand up from a chair.

Comb your hair.

Drink some water.

Hum a song.

create

Transform a small box into an imitation digital clock. Decorate the box with whatever you wish—colors, collage materials, textures, designs, and so on. In the space where the digital time would normally show, print the words “The Present Moment.” Try to practice mindfulness as you work on this project, paying attention to every step you take with your hands, your materials, and your mind—without judgment. Set your clock where you will see it frequently so that it can remind you to keep your focus on the now.

transcend

Think about what would happen if you did not have any memory of the past. You would not have any images or thoughts in your mind of bingeing or purging. You would not know that you have ever used those behaviors to cope. If you had never used them before, you would not have an automatic urge to turn to them. What would you do instead? What did you used to do to cope before you ever started using those behaviors? Write about this in your journal.

peace through gratitude 1 1

affirmation

I find peace through gratitude.

Bulimia is about what we hate: our bodies, our mistakes, our flaws, ourselves. Using bulimia keeps us swirling in the negatives. Our heads can spin with all the things we think are wrong.

Moving beyond bulimia involves switching that focus. We don't binge and purge when we are focusing on the good in our lives. Instead of feeling like victims of all that is bad, we can embrace the good. Instead of seeing the misfortune, we can see the blessings.

Gratitude is a celebration of the gifts. Can we walk? Can we laugh? Do we have places to go home to? Is there one person who cares about us? Finding and expressing gratitude is one of the shortest routes to the peace within us. This is a coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Circle any of the following items that you are grateful for, and then add at least ten more of your own.

I can hear music.

I am not homeless.

I can breathe.

I have a place to sleep.

I am getting an education.

I have medical care.

I got a present on my last birthday.

I have a sense of humor.

I can read.

I can see the sky.

I know who my parents are.

I know someone who loves me.

I have one memory that I cherish.

I am working my way out of bulimia.

activity 11 * peace through gratitude

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 10 |

Journal about how the items on your list are different from the thoughts or attitudes that fuel bulimia.

Speak

Speak today's affirmation and read your gratitude list out loud to yourself or to another person. Create an intention to shift from a bulimic attitude to one of gratitude as you are ready. Talk with someone you trust about what you think this will be like for you. Tell them about the difference between bulimic thoughts and thoughts of gratitude.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Think that you are fortunate to have a comfortable place to sit and that your eyes close when you tell them to. Let your breathing become peaceful. Remind yourself how fortunate you are to be able to breathe naturally, without being attached to a machine. Let all the tension leave your muscles. Feel gratitude that you can control your muscles. When you are calm, picture yourself in an outdoor setting that you have actually been to and loved. Take a moment to picture everything about that place. Feel gratitude for your memory and that you were able to visit there. Now picture yourself visiting that place once again. See yourself relaxing there. Then picture yourself looking up into the sky and the air around you and seeing everything you are grateful for gently floating around and past you. See the people, places, things, situations, and everything else on your gratitude list floating peacefully by. You are surrounded by blessings. Watch yourself noticing each one of these things

and see yourself respond with a smile on your face and gratitude in your heart. See that you are filled with the warmth and joy of gratitude. Take a few minutes to watch yourself surrounded by blessings and filled with gratitude. Really feel the gratitude filling your heart and emanating out through your entire being. Let the gift of gratitude flow through every cell in your body and wash away all negativity, hatred, and pain. Breathe calmly and feel your peace.

Journal about what it was like to find peace through gratitude.

act

Do the creating activity below. Then keep the box you make next to your bed. For the next week, first thing in the morning and last thing at night, take off the top, and take one of the papers out of your box. Read it out loud. Let the thought of each gift sink into your body, mind, and spirit as you begin and end your day. At the end of the week, journal about your experience. Continue to add more papers to the box as you continue to receive or think of more blessings in your life.

create

Create a present for yourself to help you find gratitude. Write the items you identified above on heart-shaped pieces of paper. Add more so you have at least twenty-five. Write even more if you can. Decorate a cardboard gift box using wrapping paper and ribbon. Add other media or collage materials if you like. Put all of your gratitude papers in the box. Then follow the instructions for the action activity above.

transcend

Using bulimic behaviors doesn't mean that you are ungrateful or selfish. But consciously choosing to focus on gratitude can help you move beyond bulimia. Be gentle with yourself as you attempt to make this change. Remember to let yourself do it imperfectly. Love yourself for the attempts you make. Feel gratitude for your ability to even consider making changes. Every thought of gratitude loosens bulimia's hold. Sit quietly for a few minutes and send sincere gratitude to yourself.

12 peace through loving spirit

affirmation

I find peace through my loving spirit.

Deep at our cores of peace, we are loving, caring beings. When we remember the love within us, we find our peace. But bulimic thoughts and behaviors take us away from our loving spirits. Bulimic thoughts and behaviors are fueled by judgment and hatred, not love.

Bulimia forces us to dwell on what we hate: our stomachs, thighs, arms, hips; our personalities, our lives; ourselves. Dwelling on what we hate keeps us punishing ourselves for not being good enough. When we listen to bulimia, we are acting from chaos, fear, hatred, and violence. When we listen to our loving spirits, we are acting from peace, forgiveness, and compassion.

Showing love to ourselves and others can help us to find our inner peace and lift us out of bulimia. Choosing love is the opposite of choosing bulimia. Connecting to our loving spirits is a coping cord in our new, healthy lifeline.

think

List the ways you have shown hatred to yourself and your body. Would you treat your best friend that way? After reading it over, shred that list. Then write a second list of new intentions—ways you could show love to yourself and your body. These may be hard to think of at first. If so, ask for ideas from a friend or counselor.

Speak

Write a letter of apology to yourself and your body for any times you have sent them anything but love. Then write a statement of forgiveness to yourself for not being able to always send yourself love. Read your letter and statement out loud to yourself and to someone you trust.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably, close your eyes, and let your muscles relax. Picture yourself sitting in the warm glow of a peaceful white light. Know that you are safe and protected. As you feel this light within you and around you, you recognize it as the light of loving-kindness. Take a deep breath, and notice a feeling of love within your entire being. Feel every cell in your body respond to the warmth of this love. Accept this love for yourself, knowing that you and your body deserve it. Feel this loving-kindness emanating from the peace deep within you. Feel it grow stronger. When you are ready, make the decision to send this loving light out to everyone you know. See it radiating from the center of your soul, spreading to your loved ones. See the smiles on their faces and the glow in their hearts when they feel your love. Take a few peaceful breaths, and then send the loving-kindness out further—to people you don't know. Watch their demeanors soften and warm when the loving spirit reaches them. Finally let your loving kindness flow out to the entire planet, the universe, and beyond. Feel the endless love within you touching every being and thing in all creation. Now send this loving-kindness to yourself. Notice that the love within you grows stronger as you send it to yourself. Notice that there are no bulimic behaviors anywhere near when you send yourself this love.

When you are finished, journal about your experience.

Act

Circle anything from the list below that you could do to show yourself loving kindness. Add as many items to the list as you can think of. In the next week, do at least two of these things for yourself. As you do them, picture yourself surrounded by

activity 12 * peace through loving spirit

loving white light, and focus on sending yourself loving-kindness. When you are done, journal about your experience.

Take a nap in the middle of the day.

Read a book I've been wanting to read.

Allow myself a day without makeup.

Give myself a warm, loving hug.

Give myself a facial massage.

Allow myself to daydream.

Take a day off work.

Watch my favorite movie.

Sleep late.

Pick or buy flowers for myself.

create

In the center of a large piece of poster board, make a collage of photographs of those you love. (They may be both human and animal.) Use cutouts or line drawings of hearts or other designs to symbolize the love between you and each of them. Then add a photograph of yourself to the collage. Around these pictures, add photos or drawings of anyone in your life whom you feel negative feelings toward. Finally, add magazine or other pictures of people whom you have never met. As you look at your collage, think about who is easiest to love and who is hardest to love. Consider the importance of loving those whom it feels hard to love. Journal about your feelings.

transcend

Visit a hospital with patients who are eating disordered. Act with loving-kindness toward anyone you meet. Write a sympathy letter to someone whose loved one has died from an eating disorder.

false media images 13

affirmation

I refuse to believe media lies.

In ancient Greece, “true beauty” required that the distance between a woman’s nipples and the distance from the lower edge of her breast to her navel had to be equal. How ridiculous! We can easily recognize the absurdity of that idea because we weren’t raised from birth to believe it. And we don’t think that everyone should have the same personality, the same job, or the same hobbies. But we were raised from birth to believe that there is only one correct size for a measure of beauty in today’s world.

We are taught this idea from the messages we get from all forms of advertising. *The purpose of ads is to sell a product.* The diet industry sells its products by making us think that we are not good enough the way we are. If we all liked our bodies, how many diet or exercise products would we buy?

When an unrealistically thin beauty ideal is promoted as truth, those who do not meet that ideal think they aren’t good enough. So it is in the best interest of the diet business to keep the beauty ideal impossible to meet; this way people continue to think they are falling short. Many extremes are taken to make sure this happens. For example, even supermodels do not meet the ideal—their photographs are computer altered before their bodies are “good enough” for the photos to be printed.

In addition, the diet industry does not have to comply with truth-in-advertising laws. If you see before-and-after pictures advertising a diet product, there is a good chance these are different heads on different bodies. Some people earn their living by using computers to widen eyes, thin thighs, narrow hips, and interchange body parts from person to person.

What is so very important for us to remember is that if we hate our bodies, it is often because we are comparing them to something that *does not exist in reality* and coming up short—along with every other person alive, including the one whose photograph it is. Hating our bodies leads to bingeing and purging. Refusing to believe false media images is a coping cord in our new, healthy lifeline.

activity 13 * false media images

think

Circle the media sources whose messages affect the way you feel about yourself and your body. Add any others not listed here.

television

magazines

radio

newspapers

billboards

Internet

movies

mall advertising

List the messages that you get from these sources: for example, "There is one right way to look," "If I'm thin, my life will be better," "If I don't look like the girl in the ad, there is something wrong with me."

Talk with someone else about how each of these messages helps to sell a product. Rewrite each message to make it tell the truth instead of a lie.

speak

Cut out magazine pictures of very thin models. Look at them closely for air-brushing or alteration (sometimes this can be obvious, as when someone's thigh suddenly becomes unnaturally thin). Even if there is nothing noticeable, remind yourself the chances are high that these photos have been retouched.

Take these pictures with you to a shredder. As you put them through the shredder, say to yourself out loud: "I refuse to believe media lies. I will not compare myself to something that doesn't exist."

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Relax your muscles and release any tension from your body. Focus on your breath for a few minutes. Picture yourself and a

friend sitting in the audience of a New York designer fashion show. The lights dim and music begins and the models start to come down the runway. As you watch, you see that the models appear in many shapes and sizes, and they look just like your friends, your relatives, or people you see in the grocery store. The clothes they are modeling are beautiful. They fit well and look comfortable to wear. You realize that you look similar to many of these models. This brings up a warm, peaceful feeling inside of you. The emcee announces that all of these clothes come in a huge range of sizes. You and your friend feel so happy and enjoy the rest of the show. You notice that you feel different about yourself than usual—better, more positive, happier. Later, you catch a glimpse of yourself in a store window, and instead of criticizing what you see, you feel happy about your reflection. Spend a few minutes enjoying this feeling of body acceptance.

Journal about your thoughts and feelings when you are through.

act

Write letters of thanks, gratitude, praise, and support to advertisers that use models who do not promote an impossible beauty ideal.

If necessary, get permission first, and then destroy a scale. You might take a hammer to it or throw it in the trash—or both! As you do so, let out your anger and frustration at never feeling thin enough or good enough.

create

Design a line of dolls for young girls that come in all shapes, sizes, heights, and weights. Design attractive clothes for them to wear. Journal about what it might be like for a girl to grow up playing with these dolls rather than a fashion-model doll—or what it would have been like for you.

transcend

Teach a young girl everything you have learned about false media images.

14 the truth about my body

affirmation

My body is a miracle, not a trophy or a battleground.

The first thoughts we usually have about our bodies are about our looks. We compare ourselves to models, friends, and people we see in the mall. Are we as skinny? Are our stomachs as flat, our thighs as thin? This is using our bodies as trophies.

We hide from our real lives and obsess about our weight instead. Instead of experiencing conflict face to face, we fight with calories or chips and ice cream. We argue with our parents, cry out our hurt, drown our sadness, and release our anger by stuffing and emptying our bodies. This is using our bodies as battlegrounds.

The truth is that our bodies are neither trophies nor battlegrounds. They are incredible pieces of physical substance, simultaneously supporting fifteen different operating systems, more than twenty internal organs, two hundred bones, six hundred muscles and trillions of cells, all working together in perfect harmony. They are capable of sustaining, healing, cleaning, and reproducing themselves.

When we step away from thinking only about the look of our bodies, we can realize the truth—our bodies are miracles. But bulimia doesn't want us to see this perspective. We have to make a conscious decision to look past our outward appearance and connect with the wonder that is our physical human form. Valuing the parts of our body that lie beyond the mirror is a cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Write about the ways you have used your body as a trophy. Where did you first get the idea that the most important thing about your body was the way it looked? Write about how it feels to think beyond your looks, to the gifts your body gives you every day.

Write about how you have used your body as a battleground. What war are you fighting through bulimic behaviors? How has this affected your body, or how might it be affected in the future? What would it feel like to let your body live in peace?

Speak

Stand in front of the mirror and look at your body. Speak to it when you repeat today's affirmation out loud. Repeat it several times, speaking sincerely, and directing your words to specific parts of your body that need to hear that message the most.

Imagine

This exercise may feel uncomfortable at first, as you are probably not used to tuning in to the sensations of your physical body. Remember to focus on your breath and find your peace. If at any time your discomfort becomes too high, simply take a break and finish the exercise later.

Lie on your back in a quiet, comfortable place where you will not be interrupted. Take some calm, cleansing breaths as you let your body relax. Put your attention on your breath for a few minutes, simply following its flow in and out of your body. If your mind wanders, notice that without judgment and bring it back to your breath. Imagine that you are experiencing your body for the first time. Imagine that you have never looked in a mirror and never judged your body harshly. Imagine that you have never used your body for bingeing or purging. You are going to experience your body by simply paying attention to each of its parts, *without judgment*. Begin with the top of your head, and try to be aware of any sensation it holds. There is no right or wrong here, nothing you are looking for or trying to change. You are just tuning in to your body *with acceptance*. Move from the top of your head to your forehead, then your eyes, and on down through each part of your body. As you calmly move your attention from part to part, simply notice how it feels, accept it, breathe into it, and then go on. Allow yourself to feel whatever you feel, emotionally or physically. Continue through your entire body. When you have moved through every body part, rest for a few minutes, following your breath.

When you are finished, journal about your experience.

act

For one day, try not to look at yourself in a mirror or any glass reflection. Cover the mirrors in your house or room if you have to. During this day, try to focus on your body without looking at it. Pay attention to how it moves, to where it is relaxed, where it feels good, where it feels tense. Notice the sensations of your heartbeat, your breath, your digestion. Notice what it is like to look out of your eyes, to hear through your ears, to smell and taste with your nose and mouth. Pay attention to the sensations that occur every time you touch, or are touched by, something. Notice what it feels like to ride in a car, play a sport, sit at a desk, brush your teeth. At the end of the day, write about what was it like to focus on something about your body other than how it looks.

create

Have someone trace an outline of your body on a piece of paper that is bigger than you. Then trace over that outline with a color (or colors) and medium of your choice. Inside each of your body parts, write or draw a picture about how this body part has helped you. For example, if you played soccer as a child, you might tell how your feet worked with you in running and kicking. If you like wearing earrings, you might tell how your ears create a perfect place to hold them. When you have filled in your entire body, sit and look at it for a while. Read what you have written. Reflect on all that your body has given you. Write about this in your journal.

transcend

Write a thoughtful and loving letter to each part of your body. Let it know how thankful you are for what it has done for you and continues to do for you. Take your time with this exercise. When you are finished, journal about the experience.

affirmation

I refuse to keep hating my body.

We look at our close friends and compare. We look at other kids in our classes and compare. We look at people we hardly know and compare. Someone is always skinnier. We think if we could be as thin as them, we'd be good enough, be happy, and finally have succeeded.

But that day never comes. Because there is always someone skinnier. Even when our bones stick out and people start whispering and our parents take us to doctors, even then we won't think we're thin enough. Because bulimia won't let us. Bulimia feeds off our self-hatred.

We have to fight back. We have to take back our power. We have to tell bulimia, "NO! I will not believe you anymore." Hating our bodies is part of bulimia's trap. Refusing to go along with that hatred is one step out of the trap. We might not be able to get out all at once, but we can do it one step at a time. We can get rid of one bit of hatred and replace it with love, or at least acceptance. Changing the hatred to acceptance is a coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Over the next two days, pay attention to your thoughts. Keep a record of how often you have a negative thought about your body and what you tell yourself. Write about how bulimia controls you through this thinking pattern. What does it feel like to think of changing this? What are your fears? What are your hopes?

Think about what you would like to have accomplished at the end of your life. What would you want people to say about you and remember you by? Would you like them to say, "Wow, this person did an amazing job of staying thin"? Write about how continuing to hate your body will affect you for the rest of your life.

Speak

For every negative body thought you wrote, speak a new thought out loud three times. Choose from the suggestions below or write your own:

I refuse to let bulimia control me.

I don't hate my entire body.

There are parts of my body I like.

I love my lips (nose, feet, knees, eyes, and so on).

I love parts of my body.

I am ready to quit self-hatred.

No one else thinks I am ugly.

I'm tired of hating the way I look.

I can try accepting some parts of my body.

My body and I deserve better than bulimia.

Imagine

Sit in a quiet place and close your eyes. Take a few calm, cleansing breaths and relax. When you are comfortable, create an intention to work on accepting and loving your body. Picture yourself walking through a shopping mall. This may be the place that you usually go to try on or buy clothes. Picture yourself looking at other people your age in the mall and at the mannequins in the store windows. Notice how you feel as you do this. If this brings up any feelings of anxiety, take a moment to breathe yourself back down.

to peace. If you are telling yourself negative thoughts about your body, stop and choose new thoughts. When you feel safe and balanced, go back to the picture. Watch yourself going into a store where you want to try something on. See yourself going through the clothes on the racks. Notice how you feel and what you are thinking. Lower any anxiety and change any negative thoughts by finding your inner peace. When you feel calm again, picture yourself choosing some clothes to try on. Watch yourself going into the dressing room, closing the door, and hanging up the clothes. See yourself taking off your clothes and catching your reflection in the mirror. Notice how you feel and what you are thinking. If you feel anxious or are harshly judging your body, stop for a minute to breathe and relax. Change your thoughts to positive or accepting ones. When you are calm again, go back to your picture. Watch as you try on the new clothes. Imagine yourself becoming harsh and critical about your body. Then picture yourself stopping midthought and thinking, “NO! I refuse to keep hating my body.” Watch as you take deep, peaceful breaths to relax. Watch as you choose thoughts about your body that are respectful and kind. Watch as you choose an outfit in a size that fits and looks nice on you. Picture yourself walking out of the store with your purchase, feeling peaceful and at ease.

Journal about your feelings as you did this exercise.

act

Act out the above visualization in real life. You may feel more comfortable going shopping alone, or you may want to take someone you trust with you for support. As you go through the actions of looking at and trying on clothes, pay close attention to your thoughts and feelings. Whenever you notice yourself becoming anxious or tense, or thinking negative body thoughts, stop and breathe deeply and change your thoughts. Take as much time as you need. The goal for this exercise is not necessarily to buy clothes, but simply to work on accepting your body. Shopping for clothes can bring up our deepest anxieties and the most critical judgments about ourselves. If, while doing this, you cannot control your negative body thoughts, or if you feel overwhelmed at any time, stop and go home. You can try again another time. You may want to do this exercise in very small steps over several days or weeks. Be patient and gentle with yourself. Remember also, if you do buy something, buy it *only in a size that fits you now*. Do not buy anything with the goal of losing weight to fit into it later. Journal about your experience.

create

Even if it is nowhere near Valentine's Day, create a valentine for your body. Use paper, lace, ribbon, stickers, glitter, or any other materials you like. As you work, hold loving thoughts about your body in your mind. Write a poem or words of love on the card. When you are done, take some time alone to "give" the card to your body, in whatever way feels right to you. Then, in your journal, write how you think your body would feel receiving this gift from you.

transcend

Pretend you are a creature from another planet, looking down on Earth. You see animals of all different shapes and sizes enjoying what they are. You see plants of all different shapes and sizes living and growing as they are meant to. You see people of all different shapes and sizes—but you see the people trying to change themselves so they can all be the same shape and size. You see them hating and abusing their bodies when they can't change perfectly. Write what you would think about what you see.

physical and emotional 16 hunger

affirmation

I recognize the difference between physical and emotional hunger.

Physical hunger is a signal that our bodies need care. Emotional hunger is a signal that our souls need care. Bulimia causes physical and emotional hunger to become complexly intertwined. We have no idea where one stops and the other starts. It just feels like one overwhelming hunger threatening to engulf us. We try to keep this hunger and our fear of it at bay by strictly controlling what we eat and getting rid of every single calorie afterward. But we can only keep it up for so long until we realize we are losing the fight.

We can begin to dismantle this huge hunger and our fear of it by learning to identify and separate physical and emotional hunger. In 1861, the poet James Terry White wrote:

Had I but one loaf of bread, I would sell half,
and buy white hyacinths to feed my soul.

We can use his words to think about the facts:

1. Both physical (body) and emotional (soul) hunger need to be filled.
2. They are equally important (he sold half the loaf, not just one crust).
3. They require very different things to be filled (bread for the body and flowers for the soul).

If we were lost in a desert and hadn't had food for two weeks and someone offered us the most beautiful flowers in the world, they would not do anything to help our physical hunger. Likewise, if we were deeply frightened because a friend had just been rushed to the hospital, a caring person would give us a hug, a ride to the hospital, or a shoulder to cry on—not a loaf of bread.

Bulimia wants us to keep our physical and emotional hungers confused, but we don't have to. Since we may be used to blocking out any kind of hunger, it can take awhile to unravel our feelings. We need to be gentle and patient with ourselves. Differentiating between our physical and emotional hungers is a coping cord in our new, healthy lifeline.

think

To get a better idea of how you experience physical hunger, try delaying a meal longer than you normally would. As you start to go past your regular mealtime, notice the sensations in your body as it gets physically hungry. How does your body tell you it needs more fuel?

light-headedness	rumbling stomach	spacey feeling
stomach pain	tiredness	stomach “pangs”
tingling muscles	trouble concentrating	tingling fingers

Over the next few days, notice how your body feels when you experience emotion. You will feel a physical sensation in your body for each feeling. In your journal, record how your body lets you know you are feeling excitement, anger, and sadness. Add and describe any more feelings you experience.

speak

Tell someone you trust what you have observed about how you experience both physical and emotional hunger in your body. Ask how this is similar to or different from that person’s experiences. (There is no right or wrong experience.) Repeat today’s affirmation out loud whenever you think of it.

imagine

Sit comfortably and quietly, close your eyes, and relax your muscles. Pay attention to your breathing, letting it become tranquil and serene. Now try to tune in to the sensations in your body. Starting at the top of your head, silently scan your body parts, just paying attention—*without judgment*—to anything at all that you feel. As you go from your forehead to your toes, give at least a few seconds to each part. As you mentally rest with each body part, notice what it feels like physically. Does it feel heavy, light, tense, relaxed,

vibrating, still? Do you notice any feelings of hunger, whether emotional or physical? Allow yourself to notice everything without judgment. Accept whatever you observe. Pay special attention to the body parts where you experience physical or emotional hunger. Send these parts a special caress of love, and thank them for doing their job and communicating with you. Let yourself feel at peace with the idea that your body has wisdom to share with you about both physical and emotional hunger. Allow yourself to sit quietly with this thought for a few moments, breathing in and out with acceptance.

Journal about what this was like for you.

act

Each time before you sit down to eat over the next few days, listen to your physical hunger and decide how high it is on a scale from 1 to 10. Likewise, each time you notice yourself feeling a deep emotion, decide how high it is on a scale from 1 to 10. Record your ratings and make a note about the circumstances. At the end of the week, read back over your record. Journal about your experience and any patterns you notice.

create

Draw two separate eight-inch circles to serve as “mandalas,” or special spaces. Label one mandala Physical Hunger and the second, Emotional Hunger. As you think about the physical hunger you experience in your body, create a design or picture in that mandala using whatever medium you like. As you think about the emotional hunger that you experience, create a design or picture in the second mandala. When you are done, look at them side by side and journal about their similarities and differences.

transcend

Imagine that a small child whom you love comes to you in tears because their beloved pet has just been hit by a car. What would you do to help fill that child’s emotional hunger? Would you say, “Here, quick, eat this whole bag of cookies”? If not, journal about what you *would* do.

17 fuel and nutrition

affirmation

The purpose of food is for fuel and nutrition; I use food only for fuel and nutrition.

If we were putting fuel into a car, would we keep the pump running even though the tank was full and the gas was overflowing? No, because the car can safely hold and use only so much fuel at once. Would we fill our car's tank with soda pop or milk? No, because gas is the right "nutrition" for a car, and other liquids could damage it. Would we fill the tank when the battery was dead or a tire was flat? No, because the dead battery and flat tire require different solutions.

We act appropriately with the use of fuel for our cars, but we don't do the same with our bodies. We try to use body fuel (food) to solve other problems. It's not unusual for anyone in our society to think that food is a quick fix for any discomfort. We get this message from advertisers: chocolate is a "kiss," chips add "fun" to our lives, macaroni and cheese is "comforting." We eat more than we need because we are using food for more than just fuel.

Bulimia pushes us to take this misuse to an extreme. But we can change. Becoming aware of how we use food and learning new ways to cope will help us feel safe enough to risk new choices.

think

Circle any of the reasons below that describe why you might turn to food, and then add more of your own.

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| to escape | to numb myself | to reward myself | to punish others |
| to punish myself | to hide | to feel safe | to feel nothing |
| to express anger | to have fun | to relax | to absorb anxiety |
| to feel drama | to comfort myself | to scream | to celebrate |
| to stay stable | to fill emptiness | | |

Over the course of the next week, pay attention to any advertisements that you see or hear for food. Keep a record of the reasons given for people to eat specific foods. Do they promise fun, excitement, love, comfort? Do any of them promise fuel and nutrition? Journal about your observations.

Speak

Each time you eat today, repeat out loud before you start: “The purpose of food is for fuel and nutrition; I use food only for fuel and nutrition.” You don’t have to believe this right away, and you don’t have to change your eating habits to go along with it. Just think about which bites and which foods you are putting into your body to serve the purpose of fuel and nutrition and which you are eating for other reasons.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Take a few relaxing breaths. When you feel calm and comfortable, imagine a world different from reality. Imagine that bodies are made with fuel gauges that show whether they are empty or full. Imagine that people obtain and use food only at “food stations,” like cars fill up only at gas stations. Imagine that the food there is only the most nutritious and in balanced proportion of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Picture yourself living in this world. You wake up in the morning and notice that your fuel gauge is close to empty. You get dressed and go down to the corner to a food station. You slide your credit card through a pump, insert a tube into your mouth, and push the button marked Breakfast. The breakfast begins filling your body, and as soon as your fuel gauge reads full, the pump automatically turns off. You leave the station and go about your day. You keep an eye on your fuel gauge, filling up only when it reads close to empty. When you feel emotional discomfort, you take care of yourself in other ways. If you desire fun, excitement, love, or comfort, you find them elsewhere. At one time when you are at the food station, you see someone very upset, trying to fill up, but the pump keeps automatically shutting off. An employee of the station comes out and looks at the person’s fuel gauge. “You’re already full,” the employee explains. “Your body doesn’t need any more fuel right now. Figure out what else is wrong

activity 17 * fuel and nutrition

and what you really need.” Think about what would happen to bulimia if people could fill up only when it was really physically necessary. Imagine how your life would be different.

Journal about how you feel.

act

Interview a health teacher, nutritionist, or dietitian, or do research yourself online or in a library. Educate yourself about which foods serve which specific purposes in the work of sustaining your body and your life. Take notes about how carbohydrates, proteins, and fats contribute to your health and energy. Learn which foods are in each of those categories. Get an understanding of how a banana or a sandwich is transformed into the nutrients that your body needs and how they are transported to your organs, bones, and muscles. Journal about how this true purpose of food differs from how you use food when you binge.

create

Have someone trace around your body on a piece of paper that is bigger than you. On this paper, use words, pictures, lines, or designs to illustrate the information you learned above. Show how food works as fuel and nutrition in your body. Mark the places where fuel enters and leaves your body, where it is ground up and processed, and where it goes from there. Show the major organs, bones, and muscles that are dependent on this fuel and nutrition.

transcend

Write an instruction booklet for your body. Describe the purpose of food, when and how it should be used for optimal functioning, and what kinds of foods are most beneficial. Write a warning about what will happen to the body if food is used abusively. Write a disclaimer releasing the maker from responsibility if food is used for the wrong reasons. When you are done, read your booklet over as if you have just “purchased” your body. Journal your response.

understanding feelings 18

affirmation

I move beyond bulimia by understanding feelings.

The frenzy and fears of bulimia can make us think that feelings come out of nowhere, swiftly and suddenly, like wild animals. We try to cage them by ignoring them, or we run quickly to bingeing and purging to get away from them.

The truth is, our feelings—which signal emotional hunger—come from our thoughts. For example, if you look outside and see the sun shining, you might have the *thought* “I love the sun—it feels nice and warm.” The *feeling* that comes from that thought might be happiness or joy. However, if you see the sun shining and have the *thought* “I hate the sun—it burns my skin,” then you may have the *feeling* of sadness or disappointment.

Feelings are experienced in our bodies. They are literally a physiological reaction to our thoughts. Thinking “I love the sun” causes our brains to release certain chemicals that create a physical response in our bodies. Thinking “I hate the sun” causes our brains to release different chemicals that create a different physical response.

With bulimia, our feelings can appear to arise so quickly, it may seem impossible for there to be any thought preceding them. Bulimia wants us to stay fearful and confused, and it tells us our feelings are unpredictable and overpowering. But the truth is, if we take the time to pay attention, we can always find a thought behind every feeling.

Understanding feelings gives us power. *Since we are the only ones who can decide what we think, this means that ultimately, by choosing our thoughts, we can also decide how we feel.* Acting on this understanding helps us to feed our emotional hunger appropriately and is a coping cord in our new, healthy lifeline.

think

Bulimia makes us think that the statements below are true and cannot change, but actually they are not. Check any of the statements that you believed up to this point. Then add more of your own.

I can't handle feelings.

Feelings are frightening.

Feelings overwhelm me.

Feelings come from out of nowhere.

Feelings have a life of their own.

I can't control my feelings.

Now using a dark pen or marker, black out all of the statements you identified that you want to change your beliefs about. Write today's affirmation in your journal ten times.

speak

Think about a recent time when you felt sad, a time when you felt happy, a time when you felt angry, and a time when you felt afraid. In your journal, write a thought that preceded each of your feelings. Read your examples out loud and talk about them with another person. Explain to that person how understanding feelings can help you move beyond bulimia.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Let your muscles relax, and let all the tension leave your body. Picture yourself outside on a beautiful day. You are lying comfortably on your back on the ground, looking up at the sky, watching white, puffy, peaceful clouds go by. You feel happy and safe. As you continue to watch the sky, you notice a cloud with a thought printed in it. You see a second cloud attached to it, with a feeling printed inside. You recognize them as a thought you had as a small child and the feeling that followed. Take a minute to remember this childhood situation. Remember your thought, and the feeling it created, without judgment. Then let those clouds float on. Now you see another thought cloud with another feeling cloud attached. This reminds you of a middle-school situation you experienced. Identify the thought and the feeling it created, and remember the situation without judgment for a few moments. Then let

those clouds float on. Eventually you see one more thought cloud with an attached feeling cloud. These describe a very recent situation. Identify the thought you had about it and the feeling that thought created. Let yourself remember the incident without judgment. And then let those clouds float on. Enjoy a few more minutes relaxing with the clouds before you bring your awareness back to the present moment.

Journal about your feelings as you did this exercise.

act

Write the following feelings in your journal: angry, disappointed, surprised, happy. As you go through the day, pay attention to times when you experience these feelings. Try to find the *thought* that created that feeling and record it. Remember to distinguish between the *thought* about whatever situation was happening and the situation itself. For example, if you felt disappointed because it was raining, your *thought* might have been “I wanted to go swimming and now I can’t”; the *situation* would have been that it was raining.

create

Do a “blindfolded” painting. Choose whatever type of paint and paper you like and sit down to paint. Before you begin, close your eyes. Let your brush or fingers move across the paper wherever they will, even though you can’t see what you are doing. When you think you need more paint, open your eyes briefly and take more, then close your eyes and paint again. Repeat as many times as you like. As you are doing this painting, pay close attention to the feelings you are experiencing. Look for the thoughts that are creating them. When you are finished, record your thoughts and the feelings they created in your journal.

transcend

Listen to one of your favorite songs. Pay attention to what feelings it brings up in you. Listen to it a few more times, trying to identify the specific lines (thoughts) that create each feeling. Record your thoughts and the feelings they create in your journal.

19 managing feelings

affirmation

I can manage my feelings without bulimia.

Whether we realize it or not, we have been using bulimia to manage our feelings.

When we feel too sad, scared, uncomfortable, or angry—or too anything—it seems easier to move our minds to what we don't like about our bodies and what we are going to do about it. Then we use up our emotional energy by carrying out the next binge and purge. We stuff our feelings and then try to eliminate them. Then we feel tired (which we confuse with peaceful), until the next cycle starts. And around and around we go, never *really* managing our feelings, just managing to stay trapped.

We use bulimia because we don't think we know any better way. But there are better ways, and we can learn them. When we do, they become an important part of our new, healthy lifeline.

Read over the following ideas and discuss them with someone else.

Four Steps to Managing Feelings in a Healthy Way

1. **Name** the feeling. When you notice yourself feeling something, stop and pay attention. What would you call this feeling? Silliness, irritation, joy, nervousness? Give it the name that comes the closest, even if you don't know the perfect word.
2. **Accept** the feeling. Tell yourself that it is okay to feel whatever you are feeling. You have a right to every feeling you experience—no judgment!
3. **Express** the feeling in a safe way. Declare out loud, "I am feeling _____." Or write, draw, run, skip, shoot baskets, stomp, and so on.
4. **Do something healthy** to help yourself. What do you need right now? Do you need to sing, dance, cry, get away, cuddle, scream, sleep, ask for help, be hugged, be listened to, be with someone, be alone, change your thoughts? Decide what would feel best *for you* and take action.

If you are just beginning to learn to manage your feelings without bulimia, you might think you can't. It might seem impossible. However, these thoughts are not accurate. *The truth is that you can—one small step at a time.* This skill just takes time and practice, like learning to read or multiply. The more you practice, the better you get. You will get better at identifying your feelings. You will get better at accepting them. You will get better at finding safe ways to express them. And you will get better at figuring out what you need to help yourself.

If you are just beginning to learn to manage your feelings without bulimia, you might think, "What is the point of going through all this? It would be easier just to keep ignoring my feelings." While that might seem easier at first, ignoring feelings doesn't make them disappear. In fact, when we suppress them, they seem to gain energy. Recognizing and releasing feelings on a daily basis is an important part of staying physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy. If we "store" feelings, they will come out to haunt us later.

think

Using a computer program that allows different font sizes and styles, write today's affirmation five times, from smaller to bigger sizes, on five different pages, in the following ways:

- using a font that reflects your inner beauty
- using a font that reflects your courage and determination
- using a font that reflects your strength
- using a font that reflects your commitment to truth and health
- using a font that reflects your compassion for yourself

speak

Each time you look in the mirror for the next week, tell yourself out loud, "I *can* manage my feelings without bulimia." Speak with confidence and conviction.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably, closing your eyes and relaxing your muscles. Let yourself feel peaceful. Remind yourself that you are safe. Relax your breathing and think of a feeling that often leads you to either bingeing or purging. Stay peaceful and relaxed as you picture yourself feeling this feeling and beginning to think about moving to a binge or purge behavior. Then, very quickly, see your eyes light up as you realize, "Wait, I don't have to do this. I can manage my feelings by myself." As soon as you remember this, see yourself beginning to calm down. Your breathing slows and deepens, and you see a smile cross your face. You ask yourself, "What is the name of this feeling?" And you answer. Then you say to yourself, "It is okay for me to have this feeling! I accept that I am having this feeling. There is nothing wrong with having this feeling." Next, you watch yourself express the feeling in a safe way, which includes saying out loud, "I am feeling _____." See yourself letting out that feeling for as long as you need to, until it has subsided. Finally, see yourself asking, "What do I need to do right now?" And then watch again as you think, decide, and then act on your decision. See yourself feeling better as you take care of your needs and leave your thoughts about bingeing or purging behind.

Journal about what it was like to accept your feelings and move forward.

act

Write the story of your last binge-and-purge cycle. Include what was happening and what you were thinking and feeling for twenty-four hours prior that may have contributed to it. Then cut off or delete the ending to your story, from the part where you decide to binge or purge. Next, rewrite the ending. Instead of using bulimic behaviors, describe yourself managing your feelings using the four-step plan. Write this part in as much detail and reality as you can. When you are done, act out your story. You may choose to do this alone or with a friend. Act it out as accurately as possible, putting yourself in the actual places and using the actual words you would use. You may find that you even feel the real feelings. Whatever happens, commit yourself to finishing your "play" through to the end, giving extra energy to the parts where you use your new behaviors. When you are done, congratulate yourself! And write about your experience in your journal.

create

Identify a feeling that has been with you recently. Name it, accept it, and then try to express it through art. Using paint, and pieces of sponge as your “paintbrush,” show your feeling with whatever color, texture, line, and shape feels right to you. Experiment with the sponge: using it to drag or dab the paint, using smaller or larger pieces, using more or less paint, using it wet or dry, and so on. Make as large or small a picture as you wish. Title your picture. When you are done, journal about what it felt like to be in charge of a feeling rather than having it be in charge of you.

transcend

Pray, or hold good thoughts, for anyone you know who is struggling to beat bulimia. Picture that person naming and accepting their feelings, expressing them in safe ways, and caring for themselves appropriately, with love and compassion. Then do the same for yourself. Send yourself love and compassion for the journey you are on.

20 managing anger

affirmation

I can experience and express anger without using bulimia.

Feeling anger and frustration is a normal part of being human. We usually experience these feelings when we are blocked from getting something that we want. What we want could be anything from a concert ticket to a break from our parents' nagging to an end to hating ourselves or an end to being abused.

Many of us are never taught that it is okay to feel anger, and we are never taught safe ways to let it out. Often we learn the opposite. We may be told we don't have a right to feel angry. We may have seen anger expressed only in frightening ways, or maybe we have watched as others ignore or hold in their anger.

We may have come to use bulimia to manage our feelings of anger. Through bingeing, we try to stuff down anger and also release its energy through the frenzy of planning, finding, buying, grasping, chewing. Purging can be a violent act of anger, as we hurt our bodies trying to get rid of everything we don't want.

Now it's time to learn a new way to manage anger. It's time to name what we are feeling and tell ourselves it is okay to feel that way. It's time to start expressing our anger in safe ways and caring for ourselves legitimately, without using bulimia. It's time to slowly and safely release any anger we feel within us instead of using our bodies as battlegrounds. Knowing how to manage anger appropriately is a coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Write about what you have been told or what you have told yourself about feeling anger and frustration. List any specific verbal messages you remember hearing. List any specific nonverbal messages you have received. List any unhealthy ways you have seen anger expressed. List any healthy ways you have seen anger expressed. Write about any ways

you think you have used bulimia to deal with anger. Write about how you feel when you think about expressing anger safely, appropriately, and legitimately instead of through bulimia.

Speak

“I feel” statements are safe, healthy ways to express anger. Write “I felt angry when...” and “I feel angry when...” ten or more times each. Complete each sentence from your personal experience: for example, “I felt angry when I learned my parents were getting divorced” or “I feel angry when my best friend ditches me for her boyfriend.” When you are done, read your statements out loud to yourself or to another person. Notice what it feels like to express your anger legitimately. Remind yourself this is okay. Journal about your experience.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Release all of your tension. Find your breath and take a few minutes to follow it as it moves in and out of your body. Now think of something you have felt angry about lately, and see yourself in that situation. Notice what it is you want that you aren’t able to have. Notice what happens in your body as you feel your anger rising. Watch to see what you look like when this happens. Stay calm and peaceful as you watch yourself experiencing anger. Next, notice your thoughts turning to bulimia. You begin to think about food, your body, how much weight you want to lose. You feel angry that you have let yourself get “so fat.” At that point, stop your picture and take a moment to observe this turning point—where you switch from feeling angry about the real-life situation to feeling angry about your body. Instead of letting yourself continue with the bulimic thinking, make a conscious choice to change the ending to this story. Now watch as you see yourself say, “Wait, this isn’t about my body. I feel angry because...” Watch yourself grow more calm as you say, “It’s okay to feel angry. I’m going to let it out by...and then, to help myself feel better, I’m going to...” Fill in the blanks with any appropriate and healthy answer. Watch yourself go through each step of managing anger appropriately. Watch as you become calmer and happier. Congratulate yourself for making a new choice and using your healthy lifeline instead of bulimia.

Journal about how it felt to do this.

act

Design a Safe Anger room. List what items you would have in this room to help yourself or anyone else express anger safely and appropriately. You might include writing materials, art materials, pillows and cushions, foam rubber baseball bats, a foam dartboard, old phone books to be ripped up, a “stomping” pad, foam balls—or anything else you can think of that would help people release anger in safe ways. When you are done, actually set up a real Safe Anger room or area where you live. Use whatever materials you have available. Be creative! Then, go through your area, item by item, giving each a test run. Think of something you feel angry about, and try letting out your anger with this tool. This project may take some time to complete. Journal about your experience and what it was like to try each tool.

create

Identify something you have felt angry about recently. Using clay or any sculpting dough, spend some time consciously releasing your anger through manipulating your medium. Squish it, knead it, pound it, roll it, and so on. As you work, think about the anger releasing from your body and being absorbed into the clay. Picture this in your mind. Work with the clay for as long as you like. When you feel satisfied, create a form out of the clay that represents your anger. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Your anger form may be any size or shape that feels right to you. Put in as much or as little detail as you wish. Leave it as clay alone, or add other collage materials that feel good to you (for example, toothpicks, pebbles, pipe cleaners, beads). Leave the surface smooth, or create texture by drawing lines with a toothpick, pencil, or comb. Add your own ideas. Continue to work until you feel finished. Look at your finished product for a few minutes, and journal about your experience.

transcend

Using your breath will help you to manage anger. Think about something you’ve been angry about lately. As soon as you notice anger rising, take a breath—or more than one. When you bring oxygen to your muscles, they will relax. When you bring oxygen to your brain, you will be able to think clearly and make wiser choices about how to release the anger. Breathe, and read your anger signal. Let it tell you what you need.

managing sadness 21

affirmation

I can experience and express sadness without using bulimia.

Sadness can surface when things are quiet. We try to keep our minds and bodies busy so we don't have to feel it. Thinking about our weight, buying and eating food, and trying to get rid of calories seems easier than dealing with sadness.

Sadness can be connected to grief, loss, disappointment, or loneliness. It can also be the deeper feeling under anger. We may try to use anger to cover up our sadness because anger feels more powerful. But the sadness doesn't disappear. It is still there, waiting to come up again.

When we know how to manage our feelings, we don't have to be afraid of sadness. We can use the healthy coping skills in our new lifeline instead of hiding in bulimia. We can release sadness by naming it, accepting it, expressing it, and doing something healthy to help ourselves. We can change our sadness by changing the way we think. We can move away from sadness by connecting to the peace deep within us. We can trust that there is a power greater than bulimia to help us through.

think

An irrational thought would be: "I can't handle sadness." A rational thought is: "I can find ways other than bingeing and purging to experience and express sadness." A common way to express sadness is through tears. You may have been told that you shouldn't cry, that crying is for babies. The truth is, crying is a healthy way to express sadness. It is your body's natural way of releasing sadness. Stress hormones come out in your tears. It is

activity 21 * managing sadness

always okay to cry. Circle any other ways that you might like to express sadness. Then add your own to the list.

say “I am feeling sad because...” take a walk in nature tell someone my story

write in my journal play an instrument draw my sadness

pray write a sad poem

speak

Practice expressing sadness through words. From your present-day perspective, finish the following sentence in your journal ten times: “I feel deeply saddened when....” Finish the next sentence ten times from your childhood perspective: “I felt sad when....” Read your sentences out loud to yourself or another person. Remind yourself that it is always okay to feel sad. Then think of something that will help you feel better (a hug? a deep breath? a friend? a walk outside?) and give it to yourself. If your sadness is very deep, you may need to talk to a counselor to help you manage it.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably. Close your eyes, relax your muscles, and let your breath soften and deepen. Recognize that you are safe and secure. When you feel peaceful, picture yourself in a beautiful, tranquil place. As you look around, notice yourself drawing energy and strength from all that you see. Your body, mind, and spirit feel centered and strong. You feel healthy and balanced. As you look into the distance, you see a small child coming toward you. She looks as if she might be lost. As she comes closer, you can see that there are tears running down her cheeks and she is frowning. She appears to be looking for help. When she gets within a few feet of you, she looks up at you, and you are surprised to see that this little child is you—many years ago. When the “little-child you” looks up at the “young-adult you,” you feel compassion and love for her. You instinctively know what to do and you reach down and pick her up. She cradles herself in your arms, and you hold her close, rubbing her gently on the back and telling her everything is going to be okay.

The young-adult you knows just what to do to care for the little-child you. As you talk gently to her and comfort her, rocking her back and forth, you notice that her crying stops. She holds on to you for support, and you give it to her confidently. Soon she is peaceful, and you see she has fallen asleep in your arms. You feel good, knowing that you have done a healthy job of caring for yourself.

Journal about your thoughts and feelings when you are through.

act

Find a place that feels safe to you, like your bed or a comfortable chair you can sink into. Bring a soft blanket, your journal, and a stuffed animal or doll to your safe place. Burrow yourself in safely and comfortably. Think about something you feel deeply sad about. Write about your sadness in your journal. Cry if you'd like to. If you start feeling *too* sad, stop and take some cleansing breaths. Then go back to writing if you wish, or just stop for the day. Listen to the needs of your heart and soul.

create

You don't have to be a great writer to write a poem. Poetry is simply creating a picture with words. Spend some time writing a poem about your sadness in your journal. Write from your heart. It doesn't have to make sense to anyone but you. Choose words and phrases that express your sadness. When you are done, print your poem on a piece of paper suitable for painting with watercolors. Paint colors or images around your poem that help to show your sadness. Journal about what it feels like to place your sadness outside of you.

transcend

Sit quietly and comfortably. Take a peaceful, cleansing breath. Place your right hand over your chest and your left hand over your abdomen. Calling yourself by your first name, say out loud, "_____, I am here for you; I care about your suffering." Say the words gently and sincerely with love and compassion. Say them over a few times. Say them whenever you need to be helped out of sadness.

22 managing fear

affirmation

I can manage fear without using bulimia.

We think we are afraid of being fat, and this thought can feel intolerable. We avoid it at all costs—even the cost of our peace and our health. The truth is, there are other fears underneath our fear of fat, whether we realize them or not. We may feel fear of failing, of succeeding, or of being rejected. We may feel fear of being alone or being with people, or of not being good enough.

Whatever our fears, we are afraid to feel them. So we focus on fear of fat, which seems less frightening. And then we go about managing our fear by running the cycle of bingeing and purging. This takes our mind away from other fears, but it doesn't actually resolve our fear; it just pushes it into the background.

When we know how to manage feelings, we can use our healthy lifeline to handle fear legitimately and actually release it. We can name it, accept it, express it, and do something healthy to help ourselves. At the first feeling of fear, we can take a deep breath, bringing oxygen to our brains to help us think clearly. Then we can choose thoughts of truth such as, "I am safe," "Problems can be solved," and "I deserve better than bulimia."

think

List the fearful thoughts that keep you stuck in bulimic behaviors: for example, "If I try, I'll fail," "I can't give up purging," "I can't tolerate feeling food in my stomach," "If I tell my parents how I feel, I'll get in trouble."

Next, write a list of truthful thoughts that help you feel safe: for example, "No one can hurt me without my permission," "There is a solution, and I can find it," "Fear is just a feeling; it can't hurt me," "My friends will stick by me no matter what I weigh." If it is hard to think of safe thoughts, ask a friend or a counselor for help.

Speak

Take a calming breath and repeat your safe thoughts, along with today's affirmation, out loud. Say them with conviction and feel their truth. Take another calming breath and repeat them again, focusing on their strength. Take one more calming breath and repeat them again, focusing on the health of the statements.

Imagine

Think about something you have been afraid to do recently. Decide that you will first imagine yourself achieving this and then you will actually try it. Be realistic. This goal might have to do with eating or purging. Maybe you will take one bite of a food you have labeled forbidden. Maybe you will eat something without weighing it. Maybe you will accept a binge without having to purge afterward. Or your goal might have to do with a real-life issue. Maybe you will speak a feeling out loud or say hi to someone you have been afraid to talk to. Maybe you will try a new dive or answer a question in class. You might talk this over with a friend or counselor to make sure your goal is realistic. Once you have chosen your goal, sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Let your muscles relax as you take calm, easy breaths. Remind yourself that you are safe and there is a power greater than bulimia helping you. Let every cell in your body feel at ease. When you feel calm, picture yourself getting ready to achieve your goal. Picture yourself feeling calm and serene, taking peaceful breaths and choosing truthful thoughts. If you feel afraid, picture yourself naming your fear, accepting it, expressing it, and doing something healthy to help yourself. Then see yourself begin to do what you have been afraid to do. Use all your senses to imagine what it will look, smell, sound, feel, and taste like. Keep in touch with your breath as you imagine this scene all the way through. If at any time you begin to feel anxious, take a breath and choose a truthful thought, such as "I am safe. This imagined event can't hurt me." Watch yourself achieving your goal one small step at a time.

Journal about your feelings.

act

Plan a time when you will actually achieve what you have pictured. Think about what you can do to make this project as manageable as possible. Would it help to do it at a certain time of day, to have a friend with you, to be wearing your favorite sweater? When you are ready, remember to hold on to the coping skills of your healthy lifeline. Use your breath and your thoughts to help you. Connect to the strength of a power greater than bulimia. When you are through, write about your experience in your journal.

create

Use a medium that you have hesitated to try before. Maybe you felt afraid of using it the wrong way. Maybe you felt afraid of making a mistake with it. Before you begin pushing past this fear, remember to name it, accept it, express it, and do something healthy to help yourself. Then take several deep breaths and choose truthful thoughts, such as “This medium cannot hurt me” or “There are no rules, so I cannot do this wrong.” Taking one small step at a time, begin experimenting with your medium. Play with it. Watch how it reacts. See what you can create with it. Spend as much time as you want with this. Your only goal today is to move past your fear without using bulimia. When you are finished, journal about your experience.

transcend

Some people repeat the Serenity Prayer when they feel fear: “Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” If this prayer isn’t right for you, write one that is. Use it as a truthful thought when you feel fear.

managing anxiety 23

affirmation

I can manage anxiety without using bulimia.

When we don't know better ways to handle anxiety, we turn to bulimia. Eating turns our thoughts away from discomfort and relieves physical tension as we chew, swallow, and digest. Purging relieves more tension until our bodies are fatigued and the anxiety is gone—temporarily.

Of course, bulimia only increases anxiety in the long run. *“What if we still gain weight, what if we look fat tomorrow, what if we binge again tonight, what if someone sees how tightly these pants fit, what if someone sees who we really are?”*

We can learn to manage anxiety in healthier ways. We can use all of the coping skills presented in this book and develop our own as well. The two most effective tools are our breath and our thoughts. The oxygen from slower, deeper breathing calms our muscles and clears our minds. Then we relax and choose healthier thoughts. Peaceful thoughts relieve anxiety.

think

Circle the words that describe how you experience anxiety. Add more of your own if you'd like.

pounding heart

“butterflies”

shallow breathing

nausea

shaking

muscle tension

lightheadedness

shortness of breath

sweating

tingling in body

dizziness

chills

List the situations where you feel anxiety with school, home, and friends. For each situation, write one thought you tell yourself that brings up the anxiety. Then take a slow, deep breath, think clearly, and write a new thought that could lower the anxiety. For example, when you talk to someone you have a crush on, you might tell yourself “I’ll probably say something stupid.” You could change that thought to “I know how to talk. If I say something dumb, I’ll laugh it off.”

Speak

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in each of the situations you identified above. As you picture each one, breathe slowly and peacefully until you feel calm. Then speak the new thought you wrote out loud. Repeat this for each situation until you feel your anxiety level go down.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Put your attention on your breath as it moves in and out of your body. Allow yourself to feel safe and peaceful. Picture a small ball of beautiful golden light hovering over your head. Imagine that the warmth emanating from this light makes you feel peaceful and positive. Watch as the golden light begins to move slowly down and then passes across your face. As it crosses your forehead, eyes, nose, ears, and jaw, you feel its warmth and your face relaxes. Then the light passes across the back of your head, around your neck and throat, and you release any tension you were holding there. Next, you feel the golden light move gently across your shoulders and down your arms, all the way past your wrists and out to your fingertips. Your arms relax and feel comfortably heavy. The light moves across your upper back and around to your chest. Wherever it passes, you feel a deep warmth and your muscles relax. It moves down across your abdomen and around to your lower back, and you notice all tension leave these parts of your body. As you see the light move down to your hips, you feel comfortably warm and let your body sink into where you sit. Now the ball of golden light moves peacefully across and around your thighs, your knees, and your calves, warming and relaxing every muscle. It finally circles your feet and your toes, and your entire body feels at peace. You feel comfortably warm and tranquil, as if the golden light were bathing

your entire body, within and without. Spend some time enjoying this feeling of a body free from anxiety.

Journal about what it felt like to feel free of anxiety.

act

Thoughts that create anxiety can come into your mind quickly and automatically. You can keep them away by practicing thought-stopping:

1. Notice that you are having a thought that is raising your anxiety: for example, "I can't stand the feeling of this food in my stomach" or "What if I forget what to say during the presentation?"
2. Choose a way to immediately and forcefully tell yourself to STOP this thought. You might say, "Stop!" out loud or in your mind; picture a bright red stop sign halting the thought; give your head a quick shake as if you were physically shaking off the thought; picture the thought being zapped by a laser; or anything else that feels right for you.
3. Consciously exchange the anxious thought for a peaceful thought: for example, "I know I can handle this" or "I am lying on a beautiful beach." You can plan your peaceful thought ahead of time so it's ready immediately.
4. Say your peaceful thought out loud or in your mind.
5. Stay focused on the peaceful thought until the anxious thought is completely gone.

Read this plan over several times until it feels clear and easy to you. Practice over the next few days whenever you notice your anxiety rising. Journal about your experience.

create

Think of something that brings up a feeling of peace in you. It might be gently falling snow, a particular song, petting a dog, or whatever comes to your mind. Create a representation of this object using whatever medium you like. As you work, let your

activity 23 * managing anxiety

breathing be calm and deep, and focus your thoughts on the peaceful qualities of this object. As you create, consciously use your breath and your thoughts to keep your anxiety level very low.

transcend

Look back over the work you have done for this activity. Any peace you have felt has been of your own creation. Any time your anxiety level dropped, it was due to your intention. Realize and journal about your power to keep yourself calm and manage anxiety without using bulimia.

managing guilt and shame 24

affirmation

I can forgive myself for my mistakes. I am worthy of love and acceptance.

On the surface, we feel guilty when we have eaten “forbidden” foods. We feel ashamed of our bingeing and purging behaviors. We try to get rid of the guilt and shame with more purging. It never works.

On a deeper level, we feel guilty for all the things we’ve done that we label as wrong—yelling at our siblings, lying to our parents, failing a test. We feel shame about who we are; we think that we will never be good enough, that there is something inherently wrong with us. We stuff down these feelings and then try to purge them. They still come back.

Guilt is a normal feeling when we’ve made a mistake. But instead of hating ourselves, we need to accept our imperfections, forgive ourselves, and make different choices next time. Shame is a deep self-hatred that is never warranted. If we received shaming messages when we were young, we may believe we are unworthy. But instead of believing this, we need to know that when people send shaming messages it is because they are hurting inside—not because we are really flawed.

Bulimia only makes things worse by creating more guilt and shame. We can break the cycle by using the coping skills of our healthy lifeline. When we make mistakes, we can manage guilt by naming it, accepting it, expressing it, and doing something healthy to help ourselves—forgiving ourselves. When we feel shame, as if we aren’t worthy, we can breathe and connect to our peace. We can think clearly and choose truthful thoughts instead of lies: we are worthy of love and acceptance.

think

Everyone makes mistakes—otherwise there would be no erasers or delete keys. Make a list of the mistakes you need to forgive yourself for. Write yourself a letter of forgiveness for each of these mistakes.

Everyone is worthy of being loved and accepted. Make a list of the messages you have received that told you otherwise: for example, “You’ll never be good enough” or “You’ve made my life miserable.” Write yourself a letter of love and acceptance, explaining that these messages were incorrect and you don’t have to believe them anymore.

Write about how bingeing and purging are connected to guilt and shame for you. Write about how you can change that pattern.

speak

Share your guilt and shame messages out loud with someone you trust. Look at yourself in the mirror and say, “Making mistakes is part of being human. I forgive myself for any mistakes I’ve ever made. I can learn from them and begin again.” Then say, “I am worthy of love and acceptance. If I have received shaming messages, they were errors sent by people in pain. I choose to release those messages and believe the truth instead.”

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Take some calm, cleansing breaths and let yourself feel safe and secure. Affirm that you are a valuable person, worthy of love and acceptance. When you are relaxed, picture yourself as a little child, in the company of people who gave you shame messages. Hear those messages, but picture them bouncing off an invisible shield that completely surrounds and protects you, and falling to the ground. See them lying on the ground around you. Then watch as your little child looks up at those people and says, “I am sorry that you are hurting so much inside. You seem to be letting out your pain by sending me shame messages. But I know they are not true, and I do not accept them. I know that I am valuable and lovable.” Watch the little child walk

away from the people and see the shame messages begin to shrivel and disappear. Watch as your little child walks off into a beautiful scene.

Journal about your feelings as you did this exercise.

act

Write a letter to anyone who ever sent you a shame message. Tell these people that you forgive them, that you understand they were speaking from pain. Tell them that you are no longer going to believe their messages and are going to start believing the truth: that you are a valuable person worthy of love and acceptance. Tell them that you are returning the shame messages they sent you, that you don't want these messages in your life anymore. Write the shame messages in the letter. Put the letter in an envelope and seal it. Make a conscious decision to release these messages from your life. Put the envelope through a shredder.

create

Using your nondominant hand, draw a picture of yourself as a little child. Draw the people around you who sent you shame messages. Add conversation balloons coming from these people, and write the shame messages that you heard from them. Give this picture a title and write about it in your journal. Then, using your nondominant hand again, draw a second picture of yourself as a little child. Draw the same people around you, but this time write messages of love and acceptance in their conversation balloons. Write all the words you would have liked to hear them say to you. Give this picture a title and write about it in your journal.

transcend

If we think we will love ourselves only when we are thin, or when we stop bingeing and purging, then we are sending ourselves shame messages. We're saying that we aren't worthy of love until we meet certain criteria. To move past bulimia, we have to love ourselves now, today, just as we are. If we can love and accept ourselves now, then we will be free to change. Write yourself a note saying, "_____, I love you now."

25 tolerating discomfort

affirmation

I can tolerate discomfort without using bulimia.

We try to avoid discomfort. We don't like feeling too much food in our stomachs so we get rid of it. We don't like the way our thighs look in the mirror so we take our thoughts to a diet.

As long as we think we can't tolerate discomfort, we will keep running from it, and we will stay stuck in bulimia. "I can't stand my body—I have to diet—I can't stand the thought of restricting—I'll binge first—I can't stand the fact that I binged—I'll have to purge—I can't stand myself and what I'm doing—I want to eat—I can't stand that I just ate—I have to get rid of it."

If we reframe discomfort, we can see it both as something we *can* tolerate and as a chance for positive change. Then we can stop running and start healing. When we say, "I can handle this" instead of "I can't stand this," we can stop the bulimic behaviors.

We can learn to tolerate discomfort by using the skills in our healthy lifeline. We can name it, accept it, express it, and do something healthy to help ourselves. We can breathe through the discomfort. We can choose truthful thoughts, like "I can tolerate discomfort without using bulimia" and "Just because I don't like something doesn't mean I can't tolerate it." We can trust in a power greater than bulimia to help us through.

think

You may not realize it at first, but you already tolerate discomfort in many ways every day. List these achievements in your journal. They may include anything from "waking up earlier than I want to" to "taking classes I'm not interested in" to "going to the dentist."

Each time you tolerate discomfort, you are acting on the belief that while you may not like something, you will be able to get through it—and you do. Make a list of situations that currently might send you to bingeing or purging because you think you can't tolerate the

discomfort. For each situation you identify, write a reframed thought for it. For example, if you identified “feeling anxious about a test” as something that sends you to a binge, write: “I can tolerate the discomfort of feeling anxious about a test. I can take a breath and relax.”

speaking

Using your own words, expand today’s affirmation into a paragraph. Write about knowing that you can tolerate discomfort because you have done it before. Write about how you can tolerate discomfort by using skills such as breathing, choosing truthful thoughts, connecting to your inner peace, aligning with a power greater than bulimia, following the four-step feeling plan, and so on. Read your affirmation out loud several times today, both to yourself and to someone you trust.

imagining

Think of a situation related to bulimia where it is hard for you to tolerate discomfort. It might be tolerating the feeling of food in your stomach without having to purge, or wearing a size bigger than you think you want to be, or eating in front of other people. Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Take several calm, cleansing breaths and let your muscles relax. Let your brain be filled with healthy oxygen so that you can choose truthful, peaceful thoughts. When you feel deeply peaceful, picture yourself in the situation that brings up discomfort. As you start to notice the discomfort, picture yourself taking peaceful, cleansing breaths and staying calm. Picture yourself saying, “I recognize this feeling—it is discomfort. It is okay for me to feel discomfort. I am feeling discomfort right now. I am going to help myself by breathing through it and reminding myself that I *can* tolerate discomfort.” Watch as you remain calm and peaceful, and continue taking slow, peaceful breaths. With each inhale say, “I can tolerate discomfort” and with each exhale say, “I am calm.” Allow yourself to sit with this image in your mind for several minutes. Notice what it feels like to see yourself breathing through discomfort instead of running from it. Picture yourself having a thought of moving to bulimic behaviors but instead telling yourself, “I don’t need to binge or purge right now. I can handle this feeling of discomfort. It is temporary; it will pass.” Watch yourself come back to peace.

When you are finished, journal about this experience.

act

Choose one or more of the following activities to do for an hour. As you go through the hour, notice your level of discomfort. Remind yourself that even if you don't like this, you can tolerate it. Practice finding your peace, naming your feeling, accepting it, expressing it, and doing something healthy to help yourself.

Put a temporary patch over one eye.

Wear mittens while you write in your journal or get dressed.

Wear a sling around your dominant arm.

Wear earplugs.

Use only your nondominant hand to write or eat.

Wear sunglasses and a heavy jacket indoors.

create

Draw a picture of yourself sitting calmly and quietly, tolerating a situation that used to send you to a binge or purge. Or simply create a peaceful design that represents your ability to tolerate discomfort. Make a frame for your picture, using cardboard or poster board. Around the sides, write the words: "I can tolerate discomfort." Decorate your frame and attach it to your picture. Put this picture up where you can see it to remind yourself that you have reframed a formerly intolerable situation.

transcend

Visit someone who is facing a huge challenge: perhaps someone in a homeless shelter or a children's cancer hospital, or maybe a friend whose parent or sibling has died. Observe how much discomfort a human being can face and tolerate. Know that you have the strength within you to tolerate any challenge that comes along.

releasing pain 26

affirmation

I release pain from the past and present.

From birth, we have the potential to feel hurt. Our painful experiences may last only a minute or may go on for months or years. We may feel hurt when someone ignores us or a lifelong friend betrays us. We may feel hurt when we have been emotionally or physically abused, or teased or bullied. We may feel hurt by a careless comment or a repeated criticism.

If we do not acknowledge our feelings of pain and release them, they don't simply disappear. The energy of pain and trauma stay within us, leaving physical and emotional scars. If we don't let go of the pain, it can send us to bingeing and purging to try to escape the discomfort of carrying it with us.

We may not realize that we are holding on to pain, because we might have put it out of our minds. Sometimes we notice that a very small incident can trigger a deep emotional reaction within us. This can indicate that the present situation has touched our past pain, and it is trying to slip out.

Releasing pain can help to keep us from becoming overwhelmed. It is a coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Divide your life into periods of time: for example, infant, toddler, kindergarten, grade school, middle school, high school. Take a few minutes to reflect, and list any hurts or painful experiences that come to mind from each period. They may be anything from "kids calling me chubby" to "Mom drinking" to "missing the basket in the play-off game." Rate these items on a scale from 1 to 10 for how deeply they hurt you (1 being low, 10 being high.) Put a star next to any items that you think you may still carry pain about.

Speak

Tell someone you trust the stories behind each of the items you listed. If your list is long, you may have to do this over a long period of time. Take your time and go at your own pace. Be sure to tell how deep your hurt is and if you still carry it with you.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Take several slow, relaxing breaths and let the tension leave your muscles. Follow your breath for a few minutes until your mind clears. Then picture yourself in the middle of a grassy meadow. The sun is shining, and you are feeling peaceful and happy. You are carrying a large box and know that you are about to do something important and freeing. You set the box down and open it. You look inside and remember what you have put in there—it is all the pain you have been carrying inside of you for so long. You see the pain, noticing its color, shape, and texture. You see that it is firmly packed into the box and cannot get out. You push the pain further into the box and then put the top back on. You then tie a strong rope around the box many times, knotting and cutting it when you are done. The pain is now trapped in the box for good. Next to you is a hot-air balloon. You tie it to the box and hold on to it for a few moments, making sure you really want to let go of this pain. You affirm that you do, knowing you will feel better without it. You let go of the balloon and watch as it floats higher and higher. It is caught by the wind, and you see it taking off across the sky, farther and farther away from you. The farther away it gets, the lighter you feel. You watch the balloon until it is just a small speck, and then you see it disappear completely. When it is gone, you relax on the ground for a few minutes and enjoy your new feeling of freedom. You notice how it feels to be free of this pain. You know that letting it go will also help you let go of bulimia. You smile and feel safe and secure.

Journal about what it felt like to release your pain.

Act

Write or draw something to represent each of the items on your list on separate pieces of paper. Make a conscious decision to let go of the pain around these items. Choose an idea

from the list below for how to destroy each piece of paper, or think of your own. Take your time and get rid of each pain paper one by one. Journal about how this method of purging compares with bulimic purging.

Crumple it up.

Rip it up.

Put it through a shredder.

Cut it up.

Throw it in the trash.

Burn it in a fireplace.

Cross out the words.

Paint over the words.

Rip it up and put it in a recycle bin.

create

Working with pastel crayons on a large piece of poster board, use color, line, and form to express the pain you have carried within you. If you wish, add any collage materials that feel right to you. When you are finished, spend some time reflecting on your creation. Journal about what it feels like to have placed the pain outside yourself.

transcend

Sit quietly and close your eyes. Take a few calming breaths and pay attention to your physical body. Ask yourself in what part of your body you have carried the past pain. Be still and listen for an answer; let your body tell you. When you have your answer, send love and peace to that body part. Let it know the pain has been released.

27 control

affirmation

I can tolerate not being in control.

Not being able to control everything in our lives can feel scary. We can't control a parent's illness, a sister's temper, an uncle's alcohol abuse, a father's unemployment, our attention disorder, or a kid who spreads rumors. We *can* control what we put in our mouths. So when the rest of life feels out of control, we pay attention to food, calories, and weight. We feel less helpless dealing with a measuring cup or a treadmill than we do with the real-life issues.

Bulimia makes us think we can't handle not having control. It tells us that if we think about the scary things, we won't be able to tolerate our fear. It tells us that if we feel our feelings, they'll be so big that we'll be immediately overwhelmed. It makes us think that if we don't have control, everything will go crazy, all at once, in every way possible.

The truth is, we don't have to become overwhelmed; things don't have to go crazy, and we can tolerate not being able to control everything. The activities in this book teach us healthy, real ways to handle our feelings, trust a greater power, and find the peace that is deep within us.

think

List situations in your life that you wish you could control. Go beyond your weight and your body. Next, circle the situations beyond your control that you already tolerate. Add more of your own.

if the sun comes out

how fast my hair grows

the seasons changing

whether I have siblings

my gender

my parents' income

the driving age

other people's habits

my town's curfew

when summer begins

List any beliefs you have that help you to tolerate not having control: for example, “Everything happens for a reason,” “I am guided, protected, and blessed,” or “My family will always be there for me, no matter what.”

Speak

Talk to someone you trust and respect, and ask about the healthy ways that person handles not being in control of everything. Share your thoughts and feelings about what not being in control is like for you.

Write down anything this person tells you that might help you.

Imagine

Sit comfortably and quietly and close your eyes. Relax your muscles and take a few calm, cleansing breaths. Imagine yourself on the back of a beautiful, strong horse in the middle of a grassy meadow. You are holding the horse’s reins in both hands and guiding it along a path. Even if you have never ridden before, you are comfortable and feel very safe. You are enjoying the ride as the horse gently carries you past grasses and wildflowers. The day is sunny and you feel happy. You notice that even though the ground is uneven, your ride is very smooth. When the horse turns its head to look up at you, you see love in its eyes, and you feel peaceful and serene. As you go along, the horse begins to move just a little faster, and this feels fine to you. You like the feeling of the breeze in your hair and the warm sun on your skin. You can smell the flowers and hear birds chirping in the distance. You feel safe and secure. Soon you realize that you have loosened your grip on the reins. You begin to let the horse take you off the path and into the field of flowers. It continues to carry you gently and safely, and you feel secure. You are breathing slowly and deeply, thinking about the beauty of the day and your experience. Eventually you decide to let go of the reins completely and let the horse take you wherever it wants. It carries you past rabbit holes and streams, flower patches and waterfalls. You realize that even though you are not in control, you feel very calm. You trust the horse and enjoy the rest of the ride knowing that you are safe.

When you are done, journal about what it felt like to let go of control.

act

Ask someone you trust to help you with this activity. Cover your eyes with a soft blindfold. In a place where you feel safe, ask your partner to hold your hand or gently guide you at the elbow as you walk around the area, by holding your hand or gently guiding you at the elbow. Let your partner direct your path for five to ten minutes. If at any time you feel anxious, stop and take a breath. Remind yourself that you are safe. When you are done, journal about your experience and how it felt to let go of control.

create

This activity requires at least one other person; it can also be done in a larger group. Start by expressing yourself in some way on a large blank paper, using a medium of your choice. Put whatever you want on the paper. After three minutes, pass the paper to the person on your right. Let them express themselves on the same paper using the medium of their choice for the next three minutes. Then pass the paper to the right again (or back to you if there are only two of you), repeating the instructions. Continue the activity for twenty minutes or until everyone has had a turn, whichever comes last. When you are done, journal about your experience. How did it feel to let go of the control of your paper?

transcend

Picture yourself in a car that represents you on your life journey. Who is driving? Is it you? Food? Bulimia? A scale? Journal about how you have tried to be in control of your body and your weight, and who or what is actually in control.

embracing imperfection 28

affirmation

I know that perfection is an impossible goal.

If we never feel good enough, achieving perfection can seem like the solution we need. If we had the perfect body, we would be good enough. If we had the perfect report card, we would be good enough. If we were the perfect friend or had the perfect friend or lived the perfect life—then we would be good enough and we could be happy.

The truth is, perfection doesn't exist in our human world. So if we make perfection our goal, we always fail. And then we feel even worse. If we try to diet perfectly and then have a tiny slip, we feel angry and disappointed and start thinking about a binge or a purge. We think tomorrow or Monday or after our birthday we will start again and do it perfectly. But even if we have good intentions, *we are still human and still incapable of perfection*, so we fail again and go back to bingeing and purging.

The models we think have perfect bodies do not. Their natural human differences are masked by makeup and surgery and computer altering. The people we think lead perfect lives do not. We just do not know about the struggles and challenges in their personal lives. Our fantasies about becoming perfect can only exist in our minds. No one is capable of perfection.

Only when we stop trying to be perfect do we begin living in truth. Only when we can accept our imperfections can we become able to kick bulimia out of our lives. Accepting imperfection is a coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Pencils have erasers because people make mistakes—*all* people. Pencils with erasers are sold to everyone, not just certain people. Keyboards have delete keys because people make mistakes—*all* people. Keyboards with delete keys are sold to everyone, not just

activity 28 * embracing imperfection

certain people. The acronym **PENCIL** can help you remember: **P**erfectionists **E**njoy **N**o **C**ontentment **I**n **L**ife—because if perfection is their goal, they can only fail over and over again.

Make a list of the things you try to do perfectly but can't. Next to each item, write "I accept that doing _____ perfectly is impossible. Accepting imperfection is a healthy cord in my new lifeline. I choose to accept imperfection and be at peace instead of continuing to fail and hate myself."

speak

Read your statements out loud to yourself and to another person. Each time you pick up a pencil—or a pen or start typing—repeat today's affirmation out loud.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Relax your muscles and take a few calm, cleansing breaths. Let all the tension leave your body. In your mind, picture yourself exactly as you look today. See your hair, eyes, arms, legs, and torso. You will probably notice feelings of like or dislike as you look at different parts of your physical self. Now take a breath and make a conscious decision to stop all judgment for a few minutes. Decide to look at yourself with the eyes of acceptance. As you look again at each body part, imagine that you feel acceptance for yourself, *exactly as you are*. Even if you don't yet believe it, allow yourself to feel what it would feel like to look at yourself with complete acceptance and tolerance of imperfection. Then picture yourself looking around you at other people and other things in your life. Look at everyone and everything through the eyes of acceptance. Picture everyone else seeing things the same way—in complete acceptance of imperfection. And then come back to yourself again. Notice how it feels to like yourself just the way you are at this moment—not to put off liking yourself until some time in the future when you are "perfect." Feel the peace and tranquility of accepting imperfection. Breathe into this feeling and allow it to permeate your entire being.

Journal your reactions to this exercise.

act

As you go through the day, pay attention and make a list of the things you already accept that you do imperfectly: for example, brushing your teeth, listening in class, washing dishes, cleaning your room, playing a sport, typing. Watch other people in your life as well; do you ever see anyone doing something *perfectly*? Look closely. Do you really know anyone with *perfect* skin or hair, or a *perfect* body?

create

Find a photograph or a magazine picture that you like, or look around your environment for something you would like to draw. Using a permanent marker or nonerasable pen, copy your picture or draw your subject, knowing that you cannot erase or start over and that it is impossible to do this perfectly. Take your time and think about accepting the imperfection as you go along. Instead of thinking “Oh, that’s not right” or “I can’t do this,” try “Well, look at this” or “I’m sure giving it a good shot.” When you are finished, look at the difference between your drawing and your subject. Notice all the imperfect parts and send them love. Send yourself love for drawing imperfectly. Love your picture and yourself for your effort and your unique rendition of the subject. Write in your journal about the grace and the beauty of your imperfect copy.

transcend

Visit a classroom or camp for children who are developmentally disabled or learning disabled. Interact with a child who is physically, mentally, or emotionally challenged. Find the love and acceptance in that child’s heart, the delight and joy in that child’s personality. Find the child’s gift of spirit that overrides any perceived “disability.” Journal about your experience and the gift of accepting imperfection.

29 my authentic self

affirmation

I respect and nurture my authentic self.

Not liking ourselves can make us spend endless hours trying to please other people. We think that if everyone likes us we may finally be good enough, so we use all our energy guessing what other people want and trying to give it to them.

Constantly putting on this act denies the truth of who we really are and drains our bodies, minds, and spirits. It makes us tired and resentful and sends us to bingeing and purging to stuff down our feelings and relieve our stress.

The truth is, as long as we try to be someone we are not, we fail. We can succeed at being our best selves only if we are being our true selves. If a lilac spends its whole life trying to be a rose, it will always come up short. If it focuses on being the best lilac it can, it will glow and shine.

Another truth is that even if we spend every moment trying, we can never please everyone. If we try to be everything everyone else wants, eventually someone won't like us just because we do that. Continuing to deny our authentic selves feeds low self-esteem and bulimic behaviors. Respecting and embracing who we really are connects us to our inner peace and helps to create another healthy cord in our new lifeline.

think

Thinking as your authentic self, spontaneously list anything that comes to mind in response to these prompts:

What I like

What I dislike

Finish these sentences:

My dream is

My hope is

If I had the talent or opportunity, I would

If I won the lottery, I would

If I had six months to live, I would

If I could travel anywhere in the world, I would go to

If I could live anywhere, it would be

If I could visit any time period, it would be

If I could change one law, it would be

If I were a plant, I would be

If I were an animal, I would be

If I were a beverage, I would be

If I were a piece of furniture, I would be

The kind of clothes I am most comfortable in are

The way I most like to spend a Saturday is

Choose between each of the following pairs:

sunrise

sunset

sweet

sour

hot

cold

red

blue

bath

shower

ocean

forest

dogs

cats

day

night

city

country

summer

winter

silver

gold

car

plane

activity 29 * my authentic self

Now go back and respond to each prompt, thinking as your false self—the person you sometimes pretend to be. Write in your journal about the difference between your authentic self and your false self.

speak

Read the responses from your authentic self out loud to yourself. Then read them out loud to another person you trust. Write in your journal about how it feels to let your authentic self speak.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Let all the muscles in your body relax. Allow yourself to release all tension. Take a few calm, cleansing breaths. As you inhale, affirm the presence of your authentic self. As you exhale, imagine that you are releasing your false self, or the person you pretend to be for others. Now imagine yourself in a setting that your authentic self enjoys. Feel the freedom and lightness of being that comes from shedding the weight of your false self. Watch yourself move and interact with your surroundings from your true authentic self. Watch as people around you react positively to the expression of your genuine spirit. See yourself acting as your authentic self in front of people you used to change yourself for. Let your true self come out to them. Feel safe and happy as you act from your inner peace, expressing who you really are, not who you think others want you to be. Continue to follow your breath, inhaling your true self, exhaling your false self.

Journal about what this was like for you.

act

Make a list of the people you try to please by being someone other than your authentic self. After each name, describe how you change when you are around this person. Next, number the names on your list in order of how hard it would be to act as your authentic self around these people. Finally, starting with the easiest person, write a small step you

could take to be more authentic with that person. Set a goal to take one of these steps in the next week, and carry it out. Journal about your experience.

create

Create a mask showing your false self. Cut a piece of poster board to cover your face to any degree you wish. You may want to cover your whole face or just the upper half. Cut two holes for your eyes. If you wish, cut a hole for your nose or mouth. Think about the face you often show to others that isn't your authentic self. Color or decorate your mask to show this false self in whatever way feels right to you. You may add color, line, and texture from any medium. You may want to use collage materials. If you have more than one false self—for example if you are one person with your friends, another with your family, another with strangers—you may want to make more than one mask. When you have finished, share your mask with someone you trust.

transcend

Imagine it is five years in the future. If anything at all were possible, imagine what your ideal day would look like as your authentic self. Begin with when you wake up in the morning: what kind of room are you in, how late have you slept, who else is living with you? Go through your day moment by moment. Remember, anything is possible. On your ideal day, who would you see, what would you do, where would you go, how would you spend your time? Once you've imagined your entire day, write about it in your journal. What do the choices you imagined tell you about your authentic self—who you really are and what you really want in life? If you continue to live as a false self, will you ever achieve your dream?

30 relax and reward

affirmation

I deserve to relax and reward myself.

We are often thought of as the “good” kids. We push ourselves hard—getting good grades, getting places on time, finishing what we start, keeping our promises, following the rules, staying out of trouble. We don’t often let ourselves kick back and let go. We are the responsible ones.

Acting responsibly is a positive trait. But if it isn’t balanced with legitimate downtime, we end up bingeing and purging for relief from the pressure. The binge and the purge take our minds off our responsibilities and give us a way to let go, space out, and be out of control for a while.

We can also be very good at giving to others, but not as good at giving to ourselves. We don’t think we deserve a treat or a reward until we’re thin enough or perfect enough. But that day never comes, and in the meantime we get tired and end up using food to relax or reward ourselves.

Giving ourselves permission to legitimately relax and reward ourselves takes the power away from bulimia. Letting ourselves consciously “waste” time or do something “unproductive” saves us from doing it unconsciously through bingeing and purging. This conscious relaxation is a coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Make a list of the ways you put pressure on yourself. Write about where you may have gotten the idea that you shouldn’t take time to relax or reward yourself. Write about any times you can think of when you binged or purged as a way to relax or take time out for yourself.

Make a list of any legitimate ways that you could “waste” time or relax. These might include things like staring out the window, watching cartoons, rolling on the floor with your dog, lying on your back and looking at clouds, coloring in a coloring book, listening to music while doing nothing else, walking through puddles, playing in a sandbox, making snow angels, jumping in waves, riding your bike with no particular destination, and so on. Write about how it feels to think about doing something like this for a short time every day.

speak

Write yourself a permission slip to relax. It may read something like: “I, _____, give myself full permission to take time to relax *every day*. I grant this permission because I deserve this and because it is an activity that will help me give up bulimia. Legitimate relaxation and reward is a healthy cord in my new lifeline.” Sign it and date it.

Read your permission slip out loud to yourself. Then read it out loud to someone you trust. Explain to that person in your own words why taking time to relax is a healthy choice.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Allow yourself to release all tension. Pay attention to your breath as it moves in and out of your body. Relax your muscles and focus on your inner core of peace. Picture yourself going through a day of high pressure from school, work, family, relationships, or whatever are your greatest daily sources of stress. Picture yourself toward the end of the day, feeling tired. Maybe you are doing homework, or maybe you got home late from activities. Picture yourself beginning to think about what you still have to accomplish before you go to bed. Picture your thoughts turning to food. Maybe you walk into the kitchen and open the refrigerator, just to see what’s there. Picture yourself starting to reach for binge foods—but then stop. Picture yourself taking a calm, cleansing breath and saying to yourself, “I’m tired. I’ve done enough for today. I need a break, and I’m going to take one.” Picture yourself moving away from the refrigerator and leaving the kitchen. Watch as you move to another part of the house and begin to relax. Maybe you change into some soft and comfortable clothing. Maybe you lie on the couch and pet your cat or dog. Maybe you lie on the floor and stare up at the

activity 30 * relax and reward

ceiling. Maybe you put on your favorite peaceful music. Maybe you step into a hot tub or shower. Whatever you do, watch as you allow yourself to relax legitimately, without bingeing or purging. Spend a few minutes following your breath, watching yourself relax, and connecting to your inner core of peace. See yourself no longer feeling the need to binge or purge.

Journal about how it felt to do this.

act

For the next week, purposely plan some relaxation and reward time into each day. Put it on your schedule just as you would a class, a homework assignment, an appointment, or a date with friends. This is a date with yourself to spend just “wasting” time. (In truth, this isn’t a waste because it is helping you to achieve health in a big way.) Follow through on your plan. Spend at least fifteen minutes a day doing something you would have formerly considered unproductive. Journal about your experience.

create

Today’s medium will allow you to create without generating a finished product. If at all possible, do this activity outside. (It can be done at any time of year in any weather as long as it is safe, and you may need to get permission first.) Dip a good-sized paintbrush into a bucket of water and “paint” any outside surfaces you see that water won’t damage: sidewalks, streets, trees, buildings, cars, outdoor furniture, planters, and so on. Paint the surface with any water design you like, and then watch as your painting fades and disappears as it dries. If you cannot be outside, you may do the same activity inside, painting on a chalkboard. As you paint, try to relax and enjoy the fact that you are *not* producing anything lasting. Your only goal is to relax and enjoy yourself. If it feels hard to let go of pressure, try to get in touch with the little child who still is deep within you. Let that child come out and play, and do something for no purpose other than relaxation. Let yourself be in the present moment and allow yourself to feel the pleasure of play.

transcend

If possible, spend some time in free play with a child. Instead of playing a formal board game or video game, try to do something as unstructured as possible. Play with dolls or cars, run around outside, climb a tree, make a tent with chairs and old blankets. Think about the ways you enjoyed free play when you were very young. Let yourself spend time in those activities again. Journal about what this experience was like for you.

31 the next right step

affirmation

I stay calm by focusing on the next right step.

When there is too much going on in our heads or hearts, it is easy for us to feel overwhelmed. If we don't know how to stop that feeling, we can turn right to food for a quick fix. Centering our mind on food gets us away from the confusion and gives us one familiar focus.

But then our original problems never go away. When we are done filling ourselves and emptying ourselves, the situations that sent us to bulimia are still there, waiting to overwhelm us again. In the meantime, we have abused our bodies, minds, and spirits.

A healthier way to move past confusion is to turn to the question "What is the next right step?" There may be a million things to do or think or feel, and we don't know where to start. By asking ourselves this one question and trusting the answer that comes to us, we can get past feeling overwhelmed and focus on one manageable thought.

Asking the question "What is the next right step?" reminds us to stay in the present moment and helps us use intuition to prioritize our actions. When we ask ourselves this question, listen for the answer, and act on it, we are using a coping cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Circle the situations that can cause you to feel overwhelmed. Add more of your own to the list.

facing a lot of homework

feeling demands from parents

feeling pressure to get good grades

facing a lot of chores

high expectations from parents

pressure in sexual relationship

no time to relax

confusion about life

pressure from friends

too many activities

confusion about the future

not understanding a class

cleaning my room

learning a new skill

babysitting

facing the school day

Journal about how any of these situations might lead you to bingeing and purging.

speak

Slowly say today's affirmation out loud ten times. As you speak, pretend you already have the confidence to stay calm and to help yourself by asking what the next right step is. Really try to feel the confidence and peace within you.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably. Close your eyes and relax your muscles. Pay attention to your breath slowly moving in and out of your body. Choose one of the situations you identified above, and picture yourself facing it. Picture yourself beginning to feel a little

activity 31 * the next right step

overwhelmed but then stopping and thinking, “Wait, I don’t have to get upset about this. I can ask myself, ‘What is the next right step?’” See yourself asking this question and sitting quietly for a minute to listen for an answer. Watch as your intuition tells you what is the most important thing for you to do next. See yourself relaxing and focusing on taking just that one action. Watch yourself completing it and then asking again, “What is the next right step?” Keep picturing yourself going through this situation, completing one action at a time. Watch as you continue to use this process until the situation is resolved.

Journal about your thoughts and feelings when you are through.

act

Try to go through one whole day consciously using this question. For example, when you wake up in the morning, if you begin to think about all that you have to fit into the day, ask yourself, “What is the next right step?” The answer will come to you. Maybe it will be “Just get out of bed” or “You need to shower before anything else.” Or maybe you are arguing with a friend who just doesn’t see your point of view and doesn’t seem to be listening to you. You begin to feel frustrated, but the bell for the next class has rung. You feel upset because you don’t know how to fix the problem. Let yourself remember to take a breath so you can think clearly and then ask, “What is the next right step?” The answer that comes might be “Let it go for now, or maybe “Just go to class now.” At the end of the day, journal about your experience.

create

Purchase an inexpensive pair of flip-flop sandals or use a pair you already have. (Note that you may not be able to wear the sandals again.) Use the flip-flop intended for your right foot to complete this project. Somewhere on the sandal write the words “What is the next right step?” Then decorate the shoe in any way you like. You might use colors, textures, collage materials, paints, and so on. You might write words or phrases relating to situations that overwhelm you, or you might write question marks or other symbols relating to questions and answers or taking steps. As you work, use the question “What is the next right step?” to decide what you will do next in your decorating process. Listen for the answer from within yourself. When you are done, put your flip-flop in a place where it will remind you to use the question “What is the next right step?”

transcend

The place where you get the answer to your question has been called “intuition,” “the still, small voice within,” “a deep knowing,” “inner wisdom,” or “a gut feeling.” Some people believe this is the voice of the power greater than bulimia. Journal about how you understand this answering voice.

32 solving problems

affirmation

All problems have solutions—I can handle them without bulimia.

When we don't feel confident that we can solve a problem, our thoughts quickly turn to weight. Weight is a familiar challenge we think we know how to deal with—we just have to stick to the diet this time or get rid of more calories or get rid of them faster. This seems a lot easier to fix than not going to prom or family craziness or the pain of self-hatred.

But instead of fixing the problem, weight obsession leads to bulimia, which only brings us more shame, guilt, confusion, and self-loathing. We don't solve our body image problems, and we don't solve whatever our bigger life challenges were that sent us to food. We're stuck on a treadmill again, and we're no closer to getting off.

The truth is that all problems have solutions, and we can learn to handle them without hiding in bulimia. When life gives us a hard class or a break-up or a betrayal or a parent who doesn't understand, we can use healthy coping skills to follow a plan, step by step, and get through it *on our own*.

Here is what to do:

1. **Stop.** Close our eyes and find our peace.
2. **Breathe.** Take a few conscious deep breaths, relaxing our bodies and bringing oxygen to our brains. Then we can think clearly and process our emotions.
3. **Brainstorm.** Write a list of *any* and *all* possible solutions to the problem—including crazy and impossible ones.
4. **Act.** Choose one of the solutions that seems like the next right step, and try it. If our first choices don't work, repeat the process as many times as necessary.

We turn to bingeing and purging because we *think* we don't know any other way to cope. When we learn better ways to handle challenges, we create a healthy cord in our new lifeline. We move further and further beyond our ties to bulimia.

think

Read this example of how someone uses the problem-solving plan to meet the challenge of a failing grade.

1. **Stop.** I just got an F on my U.S. history test. I have to pass this test in order to graduate. My parents will kill me. I am freaking out. I hate this! I want to eat—now! Okay, to keep myself from bingeing I need to stop right now and reconnect to peace—I know it’s under there somewhere.
2. **Breathe.** I can take some deep breaths and relax. I realize I’m feeling angry, disappointed, and scared. I know it’s okay to feel all of these things. I can say out loud right now, “I feel angry that I got an F! I feel disappointed that I didn’t do better! I feel scared that I might not graduate!” But I know that all problems have solutions. So to take care of myself, I’ll get a piece of paper and do some brainstorming.
3. **Brainstorm.** Okay, here are some solutions that come to mind: ask the teacher to rescore the test—maybe she made a mistake in grading; run away from home; ask if she would raise my score on some of the essay questions; tell her it wasn’t fair because I was really sick that day and couldn’t think clearly; go get fries; see if I can drop the class; quit school; make an appointment to talk with her and ask if I can take the test over; get her grade book and change my grade when she is out of the room; tell her my dog died and I couldn’t focus.
4. **Act.** The solution I will try first is to make an appointment with my teacher even though this feels scary to me—what if she is mean or says no or tells me I’m a bad student? I guess I can break this down into small steps so I don’t feel so overwhelmed. My gut feeling says to just relax for a little while first. Then tonight after dinner I will plan what I want to say to her and take it from there.

Make a list of the current challenges in your life that you haven’t yet met. Choose the one that seems the easiest to handle and write about how you could apply the four-step plan to solve this problem.

Speak

Stand in front of the mirror. Feel your peace and gather your confidence. Say today's affirmation out loud with conviction: "All problems have solutions—I can handle them *without* bulimia." Take a breath, stand up tall, and repeat it again, using your own words to explain in more detail what this affirmation means. Read out loud and with confidence the four-step plan you wrote to solve your challenge.

Imagine

Sit quietly and calmly in a comfortable position. Close your eyes and relax your muscles. Breathe peacefully, bringing nourishing oxygen to your body and your mind. Remind yourself that you are learning new ways to cope with life and that at some point you will no longer need bulimia to "help" you through. Picture yourself facing the challenge that you wrote about in your journal, applying the four-step plan for problem solving. Moving slowly from scene to scene, picture yourself going through each of the steps as you have written them. See yourself being faced with the challenge and then, instead of panicking, making a conscious decision to stop and connect to your peace. Watch yourself taking some deep breaths and then naming, accepting, and expressing your feelings. Picture yourself brainstorming lots of solutions to the problem. Continue to breathe and stay calm as you watch yourself choosing one solution to try and then breaking that down into small, manageable steps. Picture yourself taking the first step. If you begin to feel anxious anywhere along the way, simply name, accept, and express your feelings, and then move on. Watch yourself move through each step, remaining serene and peaceful. Picture what happens as you try this solution. If it isn't the right answer, picture yourself taking a break to rest and then repeating the process and trying again. Continue to breathe and follow the plan until you have pictured yourself successfully solving the problem.

Journal about what it was like to face a challenge this way.

Act

Choose a day in the next week when you will actually put your problem-solving plan into action. Think about which would be the easiest and most realistic day, time, place, and manner for you to begin taking action. Prepare yourself with peaceful breathing and

positive thinking. Ask for help or support if you would like to. Sharing your plan can help you to commit to it, and asking for help can increase your energy when you need it. Journal about your experience as you take each step. Be gentle and patient with yourself. Take your time. Allow yourself to do this *imperfectly*.

create

Create a three-dimensional representation of your growing confidence in yourself. There is no right or wrong way to do this, and there are no further directions. Follow the four-step plan to figure out for yourself how to meet this challenge.

transcend

Close your eyes and relax. Let your body and spirit follow your mind. Imagine and feel yourself drawing strength for solving problems from whatever power you believe is greater than bulimia. Tap into the positive, healthy energy that runs through the universe. Feel the peace of being helped by something bigger than yourself.

33 “I feel” statements

affirmation

I use “I feel” statements to express myself to others.

Sometimes we’re afraid that if we say how we really feel, people will get mad, laugh, or maybe tell us our feelings don’t count. So instead of expressing our feelings and risking hurt or embarrassment, we ignore them and pay attention to our bodies instead. Or we stuff them down with food. Or we purge the food to try to purge the feelings.

We can learn to communicate our feelings in a constructive way. Beginning a statement with the words “I feel” shows we are owning our feelings and taking responsibility for them. Using “I feel” statements expresses our feelings without placing blame. This makes it more likely that the person we are talking to will not feel judged, attacked, or criticized, and will respond to us in a healthy way, too.

Using “I feel” statements means we put our thoughts into this format: “I feel _____ when you _____ because _____.” We can use this format in any situation just by filling in the blanks with truthful information.

For example, if your date has cancelled your plans at the last minute, you might feel anger, disappointment, or hurt. You might feel like bingeing to get rid of the feelings. Instead, you could say, “I feel really disappointed when you cancel at the last minute because I look forward to our dates” or “I feel angry when you cancel at the last minute because I can make other plans when I know sooner.”

If your coach has told you she is taking you off the starting lineup for the next three games, you might feel cheated or angry. Instead of using bulimia to get rid of your feelings, you could say, “I feel cheated when you take me off the starting line-up, because I am one of the best players on the team and have been to every practice” or “I feel angry when you tell me I’m not starting, because I have put a lot of time and energy into practices and I know I have improved a lot.”

think

List the five people in your life that you communicate with the most. Write an “I feel” statement to each of them, expressing yourself honestly. Write about how, or if, you have expressed your feelings to them before this. Then list the names of anyone in your past that you have unresolved issues with. Write an “I feel” statement to each of these people, expressing how you felt in your relationship with them. Write about how, or if, you expressed your feelings to them previously. Write about any times you think that holding in your feelings led you to bingeing or purging.

speak

Put an empty chair in front of you. Imagine the person you are speaking to is actually sitting there. When you feel calm, slowly read each of your “I feel” statements out loud, as if you were actually talking to that person. When you are done, sit quietly for a moment and if you want to, repeat the exercise. Journal about your experience. What was it like to express your feelings openly and honestly?

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and relax your muscles. Close your eyes, and let your breath become quiet and peaceful. Imagine that with every inhale, peace is filling your body and with every exhale, tension is flowing out. Picture yourself in a situation with another person where you are experiencing strong, uncomfortable feelings. Imagine all the details: where you are, what is happening, who is present, what is being said, what you are feeling. Picture yourself initially feeling afraid to express yourself. Maybe you start thinking about bingeing or purging or losing weight. See yourself taking a few deep breaths, connecting to your inner peace, and remembering that you can express yourself with “I feel” statements. Put your feelings into the format you have learned, and watch yourself speak them to the other person. Watch as you stay calm and centered while you express yourself. Picture yourself feeling confident and peaceful. Watch as the other person responds. No matter how the person responds, you remain calm, breathing deeply and thinking clearly. Notice how good you feel just having expressed your feelings truthfully, no matter what the other person does in response. Picture yourself finishing

activity 33 * “I feel” statements

the conversation and then moving on to the rest of your activities. Congratulate yourself for expressing your feelings in a healthy way.

Journal about what it was like to express your feelings calmly and honestly.

act

Put a note on the front of your refrigerator or the kitchen cabinets that hold your binge foods. Write the words “I feel _____ when you _____ because _____.” Put the same notes wherever you might purge or find purging tools. The next time you find yourself moving toward bingeing or purging, pause for at least a moment and complete the “I feel” statement honestly. Say it out loud if possible.

Begin trying to use “I feel” statements during the course of your daily life. Journal about what this feels like.

create

Think of the person it would be the hardest for you to tell your feelings to. Draw a picture of yourself talking to this person and add conversation balloons. In your balloon, write the “I feel” statements you could use to let this person know how you feel. In the other person’s balloon, write the words you would like to hear back once you have expressed yourself appropriately. Repeat this exercise at least once more, using the same person and a different feeling, or using a different person.

transcend

The next time you binge or purge, think about whom you would be talking to and what you would be saying if you were expressing yourself with an “I feel” statement instead of through bulimia. You may not know the answer to this at first. Trust your gut feeling and the first thoughts that come to your mind.

acting assertively 34

affirmation

I express myself assertively.

When we don't feel confident standing up for ourselves, we may let bulimia speak for us. If we don't say out loud, "I feel hurt by what you said" or "I feel angry because of how you treated me," we stuff down our feelings and purge them later. This expresses our feelings in a passive-aggressive way—saying nothing up front but then showing aggression to our bodies. This method never gets our needs met. It does lower our self-esteem and keep us feeling powerless with other people.

The truth is, we have a right to stand up for ourselves, and we can do so by acting assertively. Assertive communication means *we speak what we believe and ask directly for what we want but we also respect the opinions and rights of others*. We take responsibility for our thoughts, feelings, and actions, without blaming.

It is easiest to express ourselves assertively when we are calm and thinking clearly. This may mean we need to plan a specific time to approach the people we want to communicate with. We may need to think about what we're going to say ahead of time, maybe even rehearsing the words we will use out loud. We can use the coping skills from our healthy lifeline to help us act assertively:

- Breathe peacefully to relax our muscles and bring oxygen to our brains.
- Find our peace.
- Choose positive thoughts.
- Trust in a greater power.
- Manage our feelings.
- Tolerate discomfort.
- Accept imperfection.
- Handle challenges in a healthy way.
- Use "I feel" statements.

think

Think about an unresolved situation with another person that has been bothering you. Write about how you may have used bingeing or purging to express your feelings about this situation. Describe how you could act assertively to express yourself instead. Write the actual words that you could say, using “I feel” statements as part of your dialogue. Remember not to blame.

speak

Repeat today’s affirmation out loud. Then read out loud the assertive words you wrote to resolve your current challenge. Read your “script” out loud several times or until you feel relaxed, comfortable, and confident expressing this message.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Take several relaxing breaths and let all the tension leave your body. As you inhale and exhale peacefully, repeat today’s affirmation silently: “I express myself assertively.” Picture yourself getting ready to use the assertive words you wrote earlier. Watch yourself take several calm, cleansing breaths. Feel the oxygen bathing every muscle and every cell of your body. Feel the oxygen flowing to your brain, where it immediately helps you to think clearly and peacefully. Watch as you consciously connect with your inner peace. Listen to the positive statements you tell yourself. Picture yourself moving to the setting where you will meet with the other person. See yourself remaining calm, smiling, and greeting the person. Listen as you exchange some friendly words, and then hear yourself as you very calmly and confidently speak the assertive words you planned. Hear yourself repeating the “I feel” statements and feeling safe and secure as you do so. Watch as the other person responds. See that you stay calm and centered no matter what the reaction is. Watch yourself leaving the setting with the other person, walking away feeling peaceful, relaxed, and proud of yourself for using appropriate words instead of bulimic behaviors. Congratulate yourself for the great progress you are making.

When you are done, journal about what it was like to do this exercise.

act

Choose to do one or more of the following activities to practice acting assertively, and carry them out in the next week or two. Add to the list with your own ideas if you like. Speak assertively with the person you visualized.

- Speak assertively with your parents about an issue between you.
- Speak assertively with a teacher about a grade you feel was unfair.
- Speak assertively with a friend about an issue between you.
- Write an assertive letter to an organization you feel is doing harm to society.
- Write an assertive letter to someone who has hurt you in the past.

Journal about your experiences.

create

Create two pictures by dipping short strands of string into paint and then letting them fall onto paper, moving them around to create patterns. Use as many or as few colors as you wish. Use different lengths of string if you wish. Create the first picture to express passive-aggressive behavior. Create the second picture to express assertive behavior. There is no right or wrong way to do this. When you are finished, journal about your results.

transcend

Go through one day approaching each situation as if being assertive were a natural part of your personality. Remind yourself often that today you are an assertive person, and then act and speak as that person would. Some situations may be harder than others. Sometimes you may forget. You will do this imperfectly, and that's okay. At the end of day, journal about your experience.

35 limits and boundaries

affirmation

I can say no.

Taking care of ourselves legitimately includes creating and maintaining healthy boundaries. This is a way of respecting ourselves and our needs. Having healthy boundaries means that we are able to say no when saying yes would compromise our well-being.

We might hesitate to say no because we don't want to disappoint other people. Maybe a friend always calls late at night when we are tired or drained, but we are afraid to say no so we talk. But then we can't get up in the morning and miss our first classes and get detention. We have compromised our well-being because we were afraid to say no.

We might hesitate to say no because we want to fit in and have everyone like us. Maybe someone offers us cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, sex, or a chance to lie or steal, and we don't want to, but we are afraid to say no so we go along. But then we get sick or get in trouble or feel bad about ourselves. We have compromised our well-being because we were afraid to say no.

Saying no to someone who wants our time or energy doesn't mean we don't love or care about that person. It means we are choosing to stay healthy. We recognize that we have to take care of ourselves before we can help other people. If we say no to peer pressure and those people reject us, it doesn't mean that we are outcasts with no friends. It means those particular people weren't interested in us personally; they just wanted more people to party with. We need to find friends that will like and respect who we really are.

When we don't say no legitimately, we can end up bingeing and purging. Taking care of others when we have no energy sends us to food for comfort. Giving in to peer pressure sends us to food to stuff down anger or guilt or confusion. Respecting our boundaries is a cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

There is a difference between helping others in a healthy way and helping others because you are afraid to say no. Helping your dad clean out the garage even though you don't want to is acting as part of your family team. Passing the ball to another player even though you'd rather make the winning shot yourself is acting as part of your sports team. Helping an elderly person across the street even though you're in a hurry is acting as part of the human-race team. Make a list of situations where you help others for healthy reasons and don't say no. Make a list of situations where you help others for unhealthy reasons and don't say no.

There is a difference between trying something new in a healthy way and trying something new because you are afraid to say no. Taking one taste of the soup your aunt made even though you don't want to is acting out of courtesy. Trying a new stunt in gymnastics even though you feel afraid is acting out of courage. Trying the extra-credit assignment in physics even though it will be difficult because it will help you pass the course is acting out of wisdom. Make a list of situations where you try new things for healthy reasons and don't say no. Make a list of situations where you try new things for unhealthy reasons and don't say no.

Journal about how not saying no for healthy or unhealthy reasons might send you to bulimic behaviors.

speak

Make a list of ways that you can say no to respect your healthy boundaries. This list might include any of the following:

"I'm sorry. I can't."

"I'm sorry, but I can't help you today."

"I'm sorry. I just don't have time this week."

"I'm sorry. I can't help you now, but call me again tomorrow."

"No, thank you."

"No thanks, I don't want any."

"No thanks, I'm not into that."

"No thanks, I'll pass."

Standing in front of a mirror, try saying each of these sentences, and any others you wrote, out loud. Decide which ones feel most comfortable to you. Think about the situations where you need to use them. Pretend you are in those situations and rehearse speaking the phrases with confidence.

imagine

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes, and let your body, mind, and spirit become still. Take a few deep, relaxing breaths. When you are calm, imagine yourself standing alone in the middle of a football stadium or other playing field. It is a beautiful day, and you feel happy and safe. As you look around, you see all of the people you know sitting in the bleachers—everyone in your life, from your closest family members and friends to people you are only somewhat acquainted with. You see your neighbors, cousins, teachers, classmates, coworkers, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and all the kids you know from school. As you look at them, imagine that you can hear them asking for all the things they want from you: your time, energy, love, opinions, actions, companionship, help, friendship, and so on. Imagine that you can actually see all of these requests coming to you through the air. They are coming slowly but surely from all directions, moving toward you. You know that you cannot possibly give everything that everyone is asking of you. You know that you need to take care of yourself by saying no. Now picture yourself looking down and seeing a brightly colored hula hoop hovering around your waist. This hula hoop represents your healthy personal boundary. You see that it is strong and solid, even as it floats around you. Understanding that you have this boundary to protect you, you feel calm and sure of yourself. You know that you don't have to do anything that would compromise your well-being. You watch as the requests come closer to you, and you see that you are able to make wise decisions about which ones you will let past your hula-hoop boundary and which ones you will not let past. When the requests reach your boundary, you do not feel overwhelmed, but you judge each one individually, saying yes or no as you feel appropriate. You see that you have many more nos than yeses because you know that you need to keep yourself safe and healthy. Continue to feel calm and breathe peacefully as you watch yourself confidently making decisions about which requests to let past your boundary. When you leave this visualization, carry the hula-hoop image with you, knowing that at any time in real life, you have the ability to maintain your healthy boundary by saying no.

Journal about how it felt to take care of yourself by setting healthy boundaries.

act

As you go through the next week, imagine the hula hoop around you wherever you go. Pay close attention to the requests that others make of you, and think about whether it is healthier for you to say no or yes in answer to them. Even if you don't make changes at this time, be aware of your feelings and decisions. Pay attention to any feelings of being overwhelmed or any times these requests lead you to thoughts of bingeing and purging. Journal about your observations each day.

create

Using whatever materials you like and have permission to use, decorate something that represents an assertive boundary to your personal space. This might be your bedroom door (or part of the door if you share a room), your closet door, locker door, dresser drawer, desk drawer, jewelry box, or any place that you keep personal items. Use pictures, words such as "private," "personal," and so on, collage materials, or other decorations that help you remember your right to have healthy personal boundaries in your life. Journal about what it feels like to think about having boundaries for yourself.

transcend

When airplane flights take off, flight attendants explain safety rules to all the passengers. One of the first things they explain is that if the cabin should lose oxygen, oxygen masks will automatically drop from overhead compartments. The rule is always the same: *Put your own oxygen mask on **first**, before helping children or anyone else around you.* They know that you must help yourself first to have the energy or ability to help anyone else. Journal about how this rule relates to setting healthy boundaries and being able to say no.

36 honesty

affirmation

I move beyond bulimia by being honest with myself and others.

It can feel scary to think about being honest. We're afraid that if we tell others what we really think and feel, we might be rejected or laughed at. If we are honest with ourselves, we might have to face thoughts or feelings we think we can't handle. If we really look at our bulimic behavior, we might see the danger and destruction of it. We might have to admit that it's not working the way we had hoped.

But honesty is recovery. If we ever want to move beyond the trap of bulimia, we have to start being truthful. Honesty helps to break the cycle of using bingeing and purging to get through our lives. Bingeing and purging are lying. The lie of the binge is that it will make us feel better. The lie of the purge is that it will correct the binge. One lie can't correct another lie. The more we lie, the more trapped we get.

We have to risk trying honesty. We can start small. We can look at ourselves and our behaviors. We can accept what we see and yet commit to moving on. We can be truthful with others and strong enough to accept their responses. We can clear out all the deception that holds bulimia in place with honesty as a cord in our lifeline, we can be free to be our true selves.

think

List the ways that bulimia keeps you lying. Do you tell others you are bingeing and purging? Do you tell yourself this will be the last time? Do you tell yourself how you are damaging your body when you purge? Do you tell yourself that your behavior isn't so unusual? Do you tell yourself it's normal not to eat in front of other people? List any secrets you are keeping.

Speak

Stand in front of the mirror and speak your lies and secrets out loud to yourself—*without judgment*. Accept that dishonesty was a coping skill you thought you needed until now. And then speak today's affirmation out loud. Make a commitment to moving beyond dishonesty.

If possible, speak your lies and secrets out loud to someone you trust—a friend or a counselor. Journal about how this felt for you.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Allow your breath to become calm and peaceful. Let all the tension leave your muscles and your body. Imagine that with every inhale you are breathing in truth and with every exhale you are breathing out secrets and lies. Think of the specific secrets you want to release. Picture those very words moving out into the air around you, further and further away, and then disappearing into thin air. Imagine each secret that you want to get rid of leaving your body, mind, and spirit. Feel the sensation of lightness that fills you. Continue repeating this visualization until all of your secrets and lies are gone. Allow yourself to feel the absence of dishonesty within you. Imagine that every cell in your being is now clean and pure. You have replaced bulimia with the truth. Spend a few minutes becoming comfortable with this state of being.

Journal about how you feel.

Act

Choose one or more of the secrets and lies from your list to work with. Think about what it would take to turn this dishonesty into honesty. Break the goal down into small, manageable steps. For example, maybe you told your best friend that you missed her party because you had to babysit, but it was really because you couldn't fit into your jeans and felt so fat and depressed that you binged. You want to tell her the truth, but you feel scared. Break it down into steps: (1) decide what you are going to say; (2) rehearse; (3) call her and say you need to talk; (4) set up a time to meet; (5) before you go, breathe,

relax, meditate, write in your journal, use positive thoughts; (6) meet with her; (7) say as much as you are comfortable with at this time—you might just want to tell part of your story. Whatever goal you choose, take your time and be patient and gentle with yourself. Manage your feelings in healthy ways. Journal about your feelings and what this experience was like. When you have accomplished this task, give yourself a healthy, nurturing gift and a huge congratulations.

create

Create a truth container for yourself. Decorate a glass jar with a lid in any way you wish, making sure you are still able to see through to the inside. Write or affix the word “Truth” on the jar. On small pieces of paper, write the secret truths you need to admit to yourself or share with others: for example, “I want to heal,” “I have stolen food,” “I use laxatives,” or “I’m lonely.” Also include new, healthy truths that you are adding to your life, such as: “I accept myself,” “I deserve better than bulimia,” or “I connect to my inner peace.” Each time you are able to start acting honestly around a secret truth, remove the paper from the jar and throw it away. Each time you are able to incorporate a new, healthy truth into your life, add it to the jar. Keep your truth jar throughout your recovery. Be patient with yourself. One day your jar will be filled with more healthy truths than secrets.

transcend

Write about what it would be like if someone you loved wanted to share their truth with you. Maybe they were trying to move beyond bulimia or another addiction. Maybe they were trying to grow in a healthy way. Think about how you would treat them and how you would handle hearing their truth. If possible, offer to hear the truth of someone you know. Give that person the gifts of love and acceptance.

acceptance and forgiveness 37

affirmation

I accept and forgive myself and others.

As long as we are alive on this planet, we will be imperfect and we will make mistakes. Other people will also make mistakes that will affect us. Since the beginning of time, no one has yet found a way around this. If we accept our imperfection and forgive ourselves and others, we can find peace. If we continue hating our imperfection, we will continue to hate ourselves, and this will fuel our bulimic behaviors.

Hating the imperfection of our bodies, or anything else about us, keeps us locked in the trap of bulimia. Looking at ourselves negatively—our cheeks, our arms, our stomachs, our hips, our personalities—sends us to bingeing and purging. Criticizing, judging, and condemning ourselves or others for mistakes and imperfections fuels the cycle of negativity that makes bulimia our lifeline.

In order to reclaim our power, we need to practice acceptance and forgiveness of ourselves and others. When we accept the imperfections of life and of all people, and when we forgive ourselves and others for our natural human mistakes, we weaken the control of bulimia and create a new cord in our healthy lifeline.

think

Make a list of any and all things you need to forgive yourself for. With gentleness and sincerity, write yourself a loving letter of forgiveness. Use kind and compassionate language.

Make a list of anything you need to forgive other people for. Write sincere letters of forgiveness to each of them.

Speak

Read your letter of forgiveness to yourself out loud in front of the mirror. Glance up once in a while as you read, and look into your eyes. Read the letter again at the end of the day and once a day for the next week. At the end of the week, journal about how this experience has affected you. Save your letter to use in the Act section of this activity.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Relax your body and focus on your breath. Let yourself feel calm and peaceful. Let your mind clear, and then focus only on the word “forgiveness.” Picture the word in your mind as if it is saturated with love. Feel the love emanating from the word as you look at it. Let yourself feel the energy of love radiating out toward you, and let yourself actually feel that love spreading to and through your body. As you inhale and exhale, say the word “forgiveness” silently to yourself. Feel the forgiveness moving through you, and relax into it. Let it spread throughout your body and your mind. Let every cell in your body become immersed in forgiveness. Allow yourself to feel the forgiveness moving through you and then out into the area surrounding your body. Imagine yourself being cushioned by forgiveness and love. Know that you are safe and secure. Know that you are forgiven.

Journal about your feelings.

Act

After you complete the speaking part of this activity, put the letter into an envelope with a stamp, and address it to yourself. Actually mail yourself this letter. Journal about how it feels to receive this letter of forgiveness in the mail.

If it is appropriate, mail the letters you wrote to other people. If you’re not sure, talk with a friend or counselor about the wisdom of actually mailing these, and then make your decision. Journal about how it feels to extend forgiveness to others in this way.

create

Forgiveness comes from the heart. Using clay, create two separate three-dimensional heart shapes of a size that could fit in your hand. Paint or decorate one heart for yourself and the other for someone you need to forgive. On the back of each heart, write the words “I forgive you.” Wrap each heart in paper. Standing in front of the mirror or another person, speak kind words and give one heart to yourself. Keep it some place where you will see it as a reminder to forgive yourself often. Give the other heart to the person you need to forgive. Journal about your experience. Was it easier to give a heart of forgiveness to yourself or to someone else?

transcend

Think of the person who is the hardest for you to forgive. Maybe it is another person; maybe it is yourself. Place a photograph of this person (or write their name on a piece of paper) next to an object from nature—a flower, stone, feather, and so on. Write on the back of the photo: “I forgive you. I surround you with love and light.” Leave these items near a sunny window for a week or so. When you see them, read the words you have written. Try to bring the words and the person into your heart.

38 handling conflict

affirmation

I can handle conflict in healthy ways.

We might know conflict only as a negative experience. Maybe our family members lose control when they are in conflict. Maybe we have felt overpowered when in conflict with others. Maybe we've never seen people express conflict safely. Maybe we don't know how to work things out with others in calm and positive ways.

If we have experienced conflict only in ways that frighten or hurt us, we might try to avoid it. We might become "people pleasers" and try to keep everyone else happy. We might become passive and never stand up for ourselves. We might think that conflict is bad and that people should never disagree.

When we don't know how to handle conflict in healthy ways, we can end up bingeing and purging. Instead of telling people our feelings, we try to stuff them down or get rid of them. This never solves the conflicts in our relationships; it only brings those conflicts into our bodies.

We can learn to handle conflict in safe ways, making another cord in our healthy lifeline. We can breathe and connect to our peace, remind ourselves that anger is okay, and express it safely. We can use nonthreatening communication skills. When working things out with others, we can use the following guidelines:

1. Choose a good time to talk—when we are both calm and relaxed, not rushing to another commitment.
2. Put the problem outside ourselves and work as a team using problem-solving skills, rather than blaming.
3. Make sure each person has an equal chance to express themselves without interruption or judgment.
4. Speak using "I feel" statements.

5. Focus only on the present situation, not bringing past or additional conflicts into the conversation.
6. Forgive ourselves and the other person for the mistakes we make, and apologize for our part in the conflict.

think

Make a list of the people you most often have conflict—or potential conflict—with. Next to each name, write about how you usually handle the conflict. Do you avoid it? Discuss it? Do you or the other person lose control? Does the conflict ever get resolved? If so, how? If not, why not?

Think of a recent conflict you have had with another person that wasn't handled in a healthy way. Write about how you could have applied the above guidelines to handle it differently. Write about how you think conflict with others may affect your bulimic behaviors.

speak

Read out loud to someone you trust or to yourself what you wrote about how conflict with others may affect your bulimic behaviors. Read the healthy conflict guidelines out loud. Discuss what they mean and how comfortable you feel using them.

imagine

This visualization may not seem possible in real life, but picture it anyway. Especially pay attention to how it feels for you to use healthy conflict-management skills. Even if the other person is not able to, your job is to learn to do this yourself.

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Put your attention on your breath and bring calming oxygen to your muscles and brain. Imagine all the tension leaving your body. When you feel at peace, picture yourself meeting with a person you have an unresolved conflict with. Picture the two of you talking about how you can use healthy conflict-management skills to work on this problem. Watch as you both take deep, relaxing

breaths. See yourself connecting to the peace within you and clearing your mind of negativity. Watch as the two of you begin to discuss your disagreement. Whenever one of you starts to become agitated, see that you remember to relax and breathe through it. See yourselves each having an equal chance to talk without interruption or judgment. If one of you starts bringing up other problems between you, or things that happened in the past, you gently remind each other to stay focused on the one topic at hand. Watch as you calmly talk together, using “I feel” statements. Picture yourselves working through the problem-solving process step by step—stopping to breathe and manage your feelings, brainstorming solutions, and choosing one to try. Watch as you work together to solve the problem instead of blaming the other person. When you are through with your discussion, picture each of you sincerely apologizing to the other for the part you played in the conflict. Watch as you accept each other’s apology and shake hands or hug each other. Congratulate yourself for using healthy behaviors instead of bingeing and purging.

Journal your reactions to this exercise.

act

Choose someone to work through a current or past conflict with, using the above guidelines. Choose a time and place to meet that will help you both feel open and calm. Talk about what you are going to do ahead of time. Copy the above guidelines, bring them to your meeting, and read and work through them together. View this as an experiment. The goal is not necessarily to resolve your conflict or come to an agreement, but simply to practice managing conflict in a healthy way. When you are done, journal about your experience.

create

Use small boxes, cardboard tubes, stones, pipe cleaners, fabric, or any other collage materials that you wish, to represent people you know expressing conflict. Create one three-dimensional representation of conflict being expressed between these people in a negative or inappropriate way. Create a second representation of conflict being expressed between them in a positive or healthy way. Journal about what you have made.

transcend

When people express conflict negatively, it is often because they never learned how to do it any other way. Think of the people you know who express conflict inappropriately. Journal about where they may have learned these behaviors. How is their behavior similar to or different from bulimic behavior?

39 triggers

affirmation

I can change my response to triggers.

Triggers are the thoughts, feelings, or situations that seem to send us immediately to bulimic behaviors. We see our reflections in the mirror, we watch someone eat chocolate cake, we feel too much food in our stomachs, we feel rejected by friends, we argue with our parents—any of these can set us off.

Triggers may feel so powerful that we think we can't fight them. Our responses may feel so automatic and fast that we think we are helpless against them. Bulimia would love for us to keep believing those lies. But the truth is we can fight triggers. We can learn to change our reactions to them. We can choose new responses.

Our responses to triggers are not automatic and unbeatable. There is actually a thought process that occurs when we are confronted with a trigger. When we can identify and understand that thought process, we can begin to dismantle the quick connection between trigger and binge or trigger and purge.

An example of this thought process would be looking through a magazine and then suddenly going into the kitchen and eating chocolate chip cookies. We may feel like this action just happened, but when we look more closely, we find the thought process between the trigger and the response:

- Trigger: Seeing magazine photos of models in swimsuits
 - Thought: "I don't look like that."
 - Thought: "I'm fat."
 - Thought: "I hate myself."
 - Thought: "Hating myself feels awful."
 - Thought: "I want to feel better/comfort."
 - Thought: "Those cookies in the kitchen would taste good/comforting."

- Response: Going to kitchen and eating cookies
 - Thought: "I shouldn't eat cookies because I'm fat."
 - Thought: "I hate myself even more for doing this."
 - Thought: "It feels terrible to hate myself."
 - Thought: "I don't want to think about this; I want more comforting cookies."
- Response: Finishing all the cookies
 - Thought: "I am disgusting for eating all this."
 - Thought: "I hate myself for being fat and for eating this and now I'll gain even more weight."
 - Thought: "I have to get rid of these calories."
- Response: Purging

think

Circle any of the actions, feelings, and thoughts below that are triggers for you. Then write more of your own.

Actions

looking in the mirror
 watching TV
 being alone
 looking at magazines
 seeing my binge foods
 getting dressed
 trying on clothes
 feeling full
 eating in a restaurant
 getting on the scale

Feelings

angry
 afraid
 anxious
 sad
 disappointed
 happy
 lonely
 bored
 deprived
 tired

Thoughts

"I'm so fat."
 "She's skinnier than I am."
 "I'll never be good enough."
 "I'm afraid to recover."
 "I hate myself."
 "I'll always be alone."
 "I messed up again."
 "I can't handle this."
 "I have to diet."
 "Tomorrow I'll change."

As you go through the next few days, pay attention to your triggers and responses. You don't have to try to change your behavior, just become aware of it. Record your observations in your journal. Then choose two or more of your triggers and write out the thoughts that take you from the trigger to a binge or purge, as shown in the magazine-to-cookies example. Be patient with yourself. It is normal to be so used to responding without thinking that it might take you a while to identify your thoughts. If you need help, ask a counselor or someone you trust.

Speak

Choose one or more of the triggers you wrote about and explain your thought processes out loud to someone you trust.

Imagine

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Quiet your mind and relax your muscles. Take a few deep, calming breaths. When you feel peaceful, imagine yourself in a situation where you are confronted with one of your common triggers. Let yourself breathe peacefully and remain calm as you imagine this. Picture yourself changing your actions. Instead of being confronted by the trigger and then going directly to a binge or purge, see yourself moving in slow motion, as if all of your actions have been slowed down to one quarter their normal speed. Continue breathing as you watch yourself see the trigger and then slowly begin to respond to it. You may see yourself recoil a bit, or you may notice a look of anger, sadness, or anxiety on your face. Pretend that you can hear every thought that is going through your head in response to that trigger. Watch as you start to respond as you normally would, moving slowing toward a bulimic behavior, but then stop the motion completely and make a change. Instead of continuing your regular response, watch as you begin to move in a different direction. Picture yourself taking peaceful, deep breaths, connecting to your peace, and choosing different thoughts. For example, instead of saying, "I hate myself," you say, "I accept and forgive myself" or instead of saying, "I can't fight this urge," you say, "I align myself with a power greater than bulimia." Watch as you make a different choice about how to respond to this trigger. Maybe you close your eyes and walk away from it. Maybe you write in your journal. Maybe you call a friend or just sit down and close your eyes and breathe. It doesn't matter what you do as long as it's

healthy and different from your usual response. Picture yourself getting past the urge to binge or purge and then moving on in your day. Sit quietly for a while and feel the peace of healthy change.

Journal about how it felt to do this.

act

Choose one of your common trigger situations and make a plan to artificially set yourself up in this situation so you can practice a different response. For example, if a trigger for you is walking by the ice cream shop, plan a specific time when you will purposely walk by there just to be able to respond differently. Or if a trigger for you is looking at your stomach in the mirror, plan a specific time when you will do this purposely just to be able to respond differently.

Important Note: Set yourself up for *success* by choosing a trigger that will be the *most possible* for you to resist. Also, choose a time of day when you will be the most peaceful and clear-headed. If possible, do this activity with a partner so you have someone to support you through it. Practice your new response ahead of time, writing it out and then picturing it in your mind several times before you actually try it. Take deep, calming breaths and find your peace before you begin. Plan to use as many of the coping skills in your healthy lifeline as you can, and set up whatever you need to help you through this. For example, if your goal is to walk past the ice cream shop without going in, maybe you will choose a time of day when you feel the strongest, prepare yourself mentally ahead of time, have a friend waiting for you down the block or even walking with you, eat a healthy meal ahead of time so you are not hungry, and so on. Plan a nonfood reward for yourself when you achieve this goal, and be sure to give it to yourself. When you are done, journal about your experience.

create

Use one of the trigger-response sequences that you wrote and spoke about earlier to help you with this exercise.

1. Choose a color of paper that will represent your trigger. Cut two one- by six-inch strips from this paper.

activity 39 * triggers

2. Write your trigger on each strip and then form each strip into a circle, fastening the circle ends together with tape or glue. You now have Trigger Circle A and Trigger Circle B.
3. Choose a second color of paper to represent your usual response to the trigger (bingeing or purging). Cut two one- by six-inch strips from this paper. Write your usual response on one strip and save the other for use in step 8.
4. Loop the strip you wrote your response on through Trigger Circle A, forming the strip into a circle (Response Circle C) and fastening the circle ends together with tape or glue. Trigger Circle A and Response Circle C will now form a two-link chain.
5. Choose a third color of paper to represent the thoughts that come between your trigger and your response. Cut as many one- by six-inch strips from this paper as you need, one for each thought you previously identified. Write one thought on each strip.
6. Form circles out of all these thought strips, looping them and fastening them together to form a chain in the order that you identified them.
7. Circle and fasten the first thought in your chain to Trigger Circle B, from step 2.
8. On the strip you saved from step 3, write a new, healthy response to your trigger. Form this strip into a circle (Response Circle D) and loop it through the last thought circle in your thought chain.
9. You will now have two chains: a short, two-link chain formed by Trigger Circle A and Response Circle C; and longer chain formed by Trigger Circle B, all of your thought circles, and Response Circle D.
10. Set these two chains next to each other in front of you. Journal about what you see.

transcend

Find an old chain and break it apart. You might take it apart link by link with pliers or, in a safe place, smash it with a hammer or another (safe) method of your choosing. As you work, remind yourself that you are capable of breaking behavior chains in your own life.

infinite possibilities 40

affirmation

I have choices at every moment.

We may feel trapped—in our homes, families, personalities, bodies, thoughts, feelings, or behaviors. We may feel trapped because we have become so used to doing things one way, thinking things one way, feeling things one way, that there doesn't seem to be any other path. Bulimia fights to keep us locked in the pattern.

Fortunately, being trapped is not the truth. When we look beyond bulimia, we learn that we actually have infinite choices at every moment. We can get out of bed or stay in, quickly or slowly, stretch first or yawn. We can take notes in class or daydream, write or print, listen completely or partially, doodle or not, with pen or pencil, phrases or words. We can look in the mirror or avoid the mirror, smile at what we see, hate what we see, break the mirror, take it off the wall, let it bother us, or let it go.

We may feel like we are trapped in our behaviors. But in reality we are not. Infinite choices means we have the choice to get out. It may not be easy but it's absolutely possible. When we stop thinking in terms of limits and open ourselves to possibilities, we dismantle the bulimic lifeline.

think

Make a list of ten to twenty things you do on an average day: for example, "go to math class," "return a friend's call," "brush my teeth," "drink a soda." After each activity, identify three or more related choices you make. For example, after "go to math class" you might list "skip class or go," "get there late or on time," "walk down one hall or another," or "walk slowly or fast." After "return a friend's call," you might list "talk or text," "call soon or later," or "talk in bedroom or car."

Speak

Make a list of choices that you have made over the course of your life. These might include to listen to your parents, to disobey, to play soccer, to play an instrument, to be friendly, to stick to yourself, to try for good grades, to try to lose weight. Read your list to someone you trust. Talk with that person about how these choices have affected you and how your life would have been different if you had made different choices.

Imagine

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Let your mind, body, and spirit relax. Release all tension. Take a few calm, deep breaths. When you are ready, picture yourself in the middle of a beautiful forest. Know that you feel safe and peaceful there. You are surrounded by wildflowers, ferns, trees, and sunlight streaming through the branches. As you look around, you see that there are paths leading in all directions from the spot where you stand. You know that you are free to take any path you like. As you step onto one path, more paths open up before you. Each time you take a step in one direction, more paths open. This doesn't bother you; instead it feels very freeing. You continue walking down the paths, following whichever one you like, sometimes moving to the right, the left, forward, or back. Soon you come out of the forest into a large, grassy meadow. There are more flowers, the sky is blue, and the sun is shining. As you move ahead, the paths continue to unfold, but now you notice that they are also reaching up into the sky. Your choices have increased. You decide to try a sky-path and as you step up, more paths through the sky open up. You feel peaceful and happy as you continue to choose paths that lead upward. Eventually you find yourself far past the Earth and moving out into space. You see an infinite number of stars and planets all around you. The paths continue to open, and you continue to choose and follow them. Finally you rest for a moment and look around you 360 degrees. You see paths leading out from every direction and angle. You stand in the middle of them all and feel comfortable. You know that you have an infinite number of choices.

Journal about your feelings as you did this exercise.

act

Go through one hour or one day bringing your unlimited choices to awareness. As you move through the moments, remind yourself: "I can sit up straight or slouch," "I can take a deep or shallow breath," "I can look in my friend's eyes or past her," "I can become agitated or stay calm," "I can send myself hate or love," "I can eat this or set it down." When you are done, journal about your experience.

create

Obtain an unused coloring book that will be all your own. Take some time to work through the pages, keeping unlimited possibilities in mind. Instead of coloring within the lines, be aware of and choose other ways to use the pictures. For example, you might color only the space *outside* of the lines, or color the page in thick stripes, or in wavy lines. You might use only shades of blue on one page, or put a piece of bumpy material under the page and rub across the top with your crayons. Allow yourself to open your mind and see choices on each page. Move beyond what you have always done.

transcend

When we make the same choices over and over, chemical patterns get set in our brains. The next time we are faced with similar situations, our brains automatically want to repeat the old patterns. The longer we make the same choices, the more the patterns become ingrained. Each time we stop and make observations about these patterns, and each time we consciously make different choices, we loosen the connections and start freeing ourselves from the pattern. Sit quietly for a moment and close your eyes. Imagine the changes taking place in your brain from using this workbook. Know that you are moving past bulimia on every level of your being.

41 accepting the process

affirmation

I accept that my life and I are in process.

Bulimia likes us to believe in rigid beginnings and endings. It tells us that right after this binge, we will never eat junk again. Or starting this semester we will never get a grade lower than an A. This thinking pattern is unnatural and impossible to fulfill. So we continue to fail and run back to bulimia for comfort.

The truth is that life is a flow and a process. All the buds don't automatically open on the first day of spring, and we didn't start puberty the day we turned thirteen. Real life progresses constantly and gradually and never stops. As long as we are alive, we never cease to grow and change.

When we understand and accept this condition, we take power away from bulimia. We don't get mad at ourselves for not recovering immediately. We don't break off relationships because of misunderstandings. We don't quit doing homework in math because we failed a test.

When we accept that we are evolving beings learning something new every day, then we don't see ourselves as failures when change takes time. Accepting that we and our lives are in process at every moment is a coping cord in our new, healthy lifeline.

think

Circle the processes that you already know about, then write some more of your own.

growing taller

learning to read

making a new friend

cooking dinner

learning to swim

leaves turning colors in fall

planning a party

learning to talk

flower seeds growing

training a pet

building muscle

the sun setting

getting over a cold

writing a paper

speak

Talk to someone you trust about the nature of life and how everything flows gradually. Talk about how we are all a part of that flow. Say today's affirmation out loud several times, and continue to repeat it as you go through the rest of the day.

imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and let your eyes close slowly. Let all the tension leave your body. Listen to the continual flow of your breath. When you feel peaceful, try to put your attention on your nonphysical self. Direct your mind to the part of you that can't be seen, touched, or recognized with your five physical senses. Try to feel the part of you that lives within your body. You might imagine this to feel like energy or spirit or whatever else comes to your mind. As you bring this part of you into awareness, imagine

activity 41 * accepting the process

that you can see it flowing. Since it is not a part of your physical body, it is free to flow unrestrained throughout time and space. Imagine seeing this part of you flowing beyond the boundaries of your body. Let yourself stay peaceful and feel safe as you picture this. Then imagine that this part of you is also not limited by time. It is a flow of your entire life, from the day you were born until now. Imagine all of your life experiences flowing together. Let yourself stay peaceful and calm as you see this. Then imagine yourself flowing even beyond the time of your life, flowing back to a time before you were born and forward to a time that still lies ahead in the future. See your nonphysical self as a fluid part of eternity with no beginning and no end. Breathe peacefully as you let yourself flow without restraint or boundaries.

Journal about how it felt to see your life as a process of change.

act

Purchase some seeds that are easy to grow or a very young plant of any kind. Follow the instructions for the growth and care of this plant. Plan to tend it and follow its life process for at least three weeks. Using a date book or small journal, record the daily changes you see in your plant. Some days the changes might be obvious, and other days, very subtle. Know that even if you can't see it, your plant is growing and changing on a daily basis. New cells are forming, and old ones are dying off. Nutrients from the soil, water, and air are providing nourishment. The life process is taking place at every moment. Alongside your written observations about the changes in your plant, journal your thoughts and feelings about this life process also taking place in yourself.

create

Find a very long piece of paper or tape several pieces of paper together so you have one piece that is at least three feet long. Place the paper horizontally in front of you. Draw a straight horizontal line starting at the far left end and going all the way to the far right end. At the far left end of the line, write a zero. In the middle of the line, write the age you are today. Think about the flow of your life from the time you were born until now. Think of all the feelings, experiences, and changes that have filled your journey and still do. Using colors, words, designs, or pictures, express these processes on the paper between the zero and your current age. Think of the possibilities of how your life will continue to

flow into the future. Using colors, words, designs, or pictures, express these processes on the paper between your current age and the far right end of the line. Let your expressions run together without any rigid beginnings or endings.

transcend

Spend an hour at dawn or dusk watching the changes in the earth and sky. Start a short time before sunrise or sunset and continue for a short time after. Notice the changes in the light as it moves from one intensity to another. Pay attention to the way shadows come and go. Notice how colors change. Set an intention to accept the process of life within yourself, letting go of attachment to false beginnings and endings.

42 unconditional love

affirmation

I love myself unconditionally.

How could we possibly love ourselves unconditionally? We refuse to accept anything above our “perfect” weight. We will love ourselves only when we are thin enough.

Has this ever worked? Will we ever get there? As long as we let bulimia run our lives, we will never be thin enough.

Unconditional love doesn’t mean we will never try to improve or learn or achieve more for ourselves. It does mean that right now, at this present moment, we agree to love ourselves just as we are—with every strength, weakness, gift, and flaw. When we make a mistake, we say, “That’s okay, I love you anyway.” When we see something we don’t like about ourselves, we say, “That’s okay, I love you anyway.” At every moment of every day, every time we are faced with our imperfection, we say, “That’s okay, I love you anyway.”

When we give ourselves conditional love, we can only continue the cycle of self-hatred. As long as there are conditions, we will never be good enough. We can move forward only by first embracing who we are now. Then we have a truthful base from which to move. When we give ourselves unconditional love, we can step out of the bulimic spin, into the freedom of a life with choices. We can take back our power from bulimia. We can be free to grow and become who we are truly meant to be.

think

Over the next twenty-four hours, pay close attention to your thoughts and feelings about yourself. Keep a record of the times that you send yourself hatred, and why. Write about how far conditional love has gotten you. Write about how hating your body has made you happier. Write about how hating yourself has helped to make your life better. Then write your thoughts and feelings about giving unconditional love a chance.

Speak

Stand in front of the mirror, look yourself in the eye, and say the words: “I love you.” Add your name: “_____, I love you.” Add today’s affirmation: “_____, I love you unconditionally.” This exercise may feel uncomfortable at first. That’s okay. You don’t have to believe what you are saying right away.

Imagine

Sit quietly and comfortably and close your eyes. Let your muscles relax. Release any tension you hold in your body. Know that you are safe and secure. Know that you are stable and balanced. Know that you are protected from harm. Focus on yourself—your body, mind, and spirit. Let yourself see what these parts of you look like in your mind’s eye. Gradually bring each of these parts into awareness. First pay attention to your body, feeling every bone, muscle, organ, and cell. Then focus on your mind, being aware of its presence within you. Finally focus on your spirit, feeling its energy and flow throughout your form. Take a moment to integrate these three parts and feel their connection to you and to each other. Then take a quiet breath and picture tiny drops of peaceful white light appearing at different points within you. The light is deep, pure, and serene. It glows with a translucent energy and warmth. Know that this is the light of unconditional love. You can feel its energy filling your form. Keep watching these drops of light, and see them begin to multiply. Watch as they slowly appear in more and more parts of you. As they increase, feel the energy of love increase within you as well. Watch these lights appear in all parts of your body, mind, and spirit—both the parts that you like and those that you don’t like. Continue to picture these lights slowly increasing until you can see them filling every inch of your being. Allow yourself to feel a peaceful, yet vibrant, glow flowing through you. As you breathe, think, and feel, allow unconditional love to fill you and warm you. Let yourself relax into this love, feeling safe and secure. Stay with this image for as long as you are comfortable, allowing unconditional love to permeate every cell in your body.

act

Acting “as if” can help you to understand and practice unconditional self-love. Choose one hour or more today to act as if you love yourself unconditionally. During that time, pretend you are already completely self-accepting. Let yourself feel what that feels like. Let your thoughts and behaviors reflect that feeling. No matter what happens, send yourself the message: “That’s okay, I love you anyway.”

Journal about your experience.

create

Using any safe, nontoxic medium you want, decorate yourself with love. You might use nontoxic paints to paint colored hearts on your body. You might wrap yourself in red crepe paper. You might decorate a T-shirt and shorts with sequins and sparkles representing love. Use your imagination to love yourself. Decorate the body you have now with love.

transcend

Unconditional love is a power greater than bulimia. It is the energy running through your healthy lifeline. Close your eyes and imagine yourself—feel yourself—aligning with this power. Draw strength from it. Trust it. Choose to partner with it and follow it as you leave bulimia behind.



Lisa M. Schab, LCSW, is a licensed clinical social worker with a private counseling practice in the Chicago suburbs. She is author of twelve self-help books, including *The Anxiety Workbook for Teens*, *Beyond the Blues*, and *The Divorce Workbook for Teens*, and has written columns on healthy families and tweens and teens. One of her areas of specialization is working with people suffering from eating problems and disorders.

more instant help books

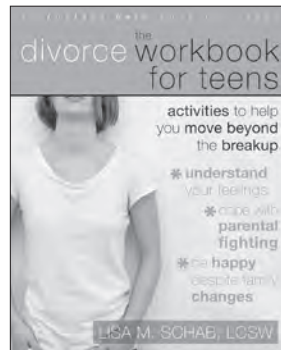
Sign up for
our Book Alerts at
www.newharbinger.com



WHAT'S EATING YOU?

A Workbook for Teens with
Anorexia, Bulimia & other
Eating Disorders

US \$14.95 / ISBN: 978-1572246072



THE DIVORCE WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

Activities to Help You Move
Beyond the Break Up

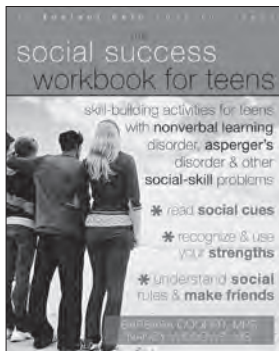
US \$14.95 / ISBN: 978-1572245990



THE STRESS REDUCTION WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

Mindfulness Skills to Help
You Deal with Stress

US \$15.95 / ISBN: 978-1572246973



THE SOCIAL SUCCESS WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

Skill-Building Activities for Teens with
Nonverbal Learning Disorder, Asperger's
Disorder & Other Social-Skill Problems

US \$14.95 / ISBN: 978-1572246140



BEYOND THE BLUES

A Workbook to Help Teens
Overcome Depression

US \$14.95 / ISBN: 978-1572246119



THE ANXIETY WORKBOOK FOR TEENS

Activities to Help You Deal
with Anxiety & Worry

US \$14.95 / ISBN: 978-1572246034

Also available as an **eBook**
at newharbinger.com



Instant Help Books

A Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.



available from
newharbingerpublications, inc.

and fine booksellers everywhere

To order, call toll free **1-800-748-6273** or visit our online bookstore at www.newharbinger.com

(VISA, MC, AMEX / prices subject to change without notice)

Check out www.psychsolve.com

PsychSolve® offers help with diagnosis, including treatment information on mental health issues, such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, phobias, stress and trauma, relationship problems, eating disorders, chronic pain, and many other disorders.

break the cycle of bulimia & take charge of your life

Have you ever had a false friend—someone who you thought was on your side, but let you down in the end? Bulimia is a false friend, too. As you depend on it more and more, your life only gets worse and worse. You may have found that you need to hide food, mislead others, and schedule your bingeing and purging cycle in order to keep bulimia in your life. If you're ready to ditch bulimia and make room for the real friends in your life, you can. This book will show you how.

The Bulimia Workbook for Teens presents forty-two exercises that will help you end the chaos of bulimia so that you can focus on becoming the person you really want to be. These exercises teach skills for overcoming bulimia based in cognitive behavioral therapy, a kind of therapy that psychologists use and research has shown really helps.

The skills in this workbook will help you to:

- Build the strength to reduce your dependence on bulimia
- Overcome perfectionism and be kinder toward yourself and your body
 - Manage difficult emotions without bingeing and purging
- Transcend bulimia by accepting and loving yourself unconditionally

LISA M. SCHAB, LCSW, is a licensed clinical social worker with a private counseling practice in the Chicago suburbs. She is author of twelve self-help books, including *The Anxiety Workbook for Teens*, *Beyond the Blues*, and *The Divorce Workbook for Teens*.



Instant Help Books

A Division of New Harbinger Publications, Inc.
www.newharbinger.com

